

BY
REASON
OF
STRENGTH

BROWN

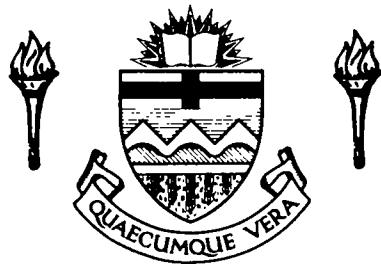
By Reason of Strength

By Winfred Q Brown

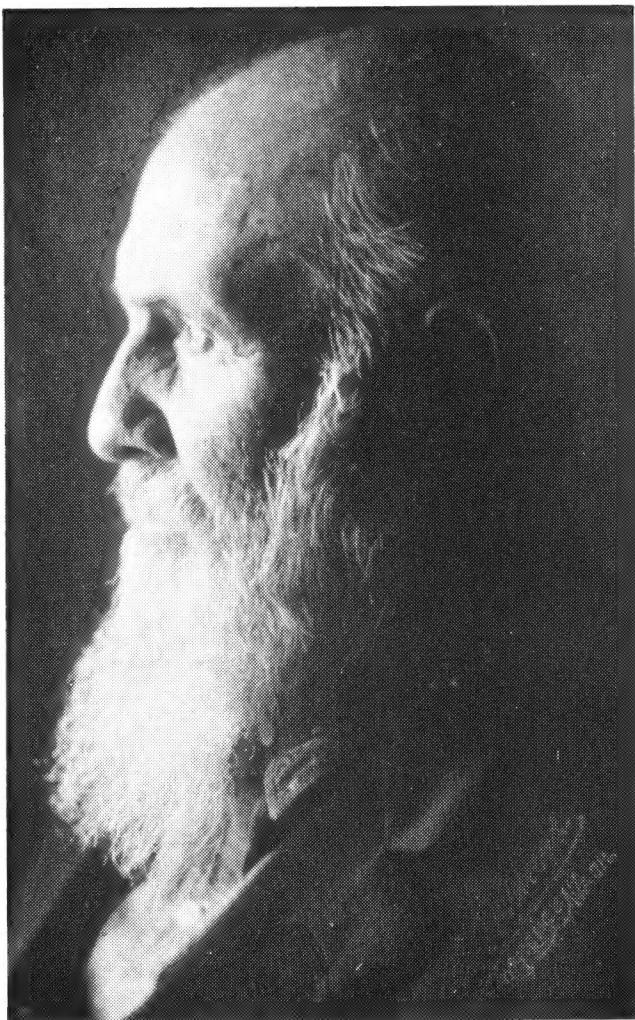
CT
275
B76
B88
1951

MAIN

Ex LIBRIS
UNIVERSITATIS
ALBERTHEAENSIS



$\zeta e^{\ell \lambda}$



JOHN RICHARDS BROWN
1837-1922

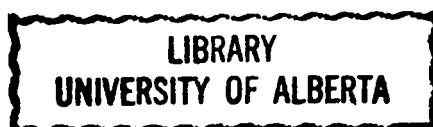
BY REASON OF STRENGTH

By WINFRED Q BROWN

DEVORSS & CO., *Publishers*
520 West Ninth Street
Los Angeles 15, California

COPYRIGHT, 1951
BY WINFRED Q BROWN
First Edition

Printed in the United States of America
by DeVorss & Co., 520 West Ninth Street,
Los Angeles 15, California.



DEDICATED TO

My Father, John Richards Brown, and my Mother, Sarah
Ann Richards Brown and to the Truth they taught us.

2550470

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the numerous members of my family who contributed so much to this story; to the patient reading and constructive criticism by Martha Fussippel, Kennedy School, Cincinnati, Ohio, and by Georgia Nicholas, Instructor in Creative Writing, Adult Education Center, Santa Monica, California; and especially to my dear wife, Margaret Acomb Brown for constant inspiration and help.

FOREWORD

The hero of this story is the family, rather than a person; a family maintaining its solidarity in spite of disrupting forces. Father does dominate the family and builds his strength into it. Changing years modify his influence, and his family breaks into younger families, as is natural, but his training and ideals still unify the group.

Some may doubt the validity of such a narrative; many will question whether families with such foundations of religious faith, may continue to grow in our modern America. To such doubters this answer is offered: it happened to us. While no claim is made for the veracity of either dialogue or incident and fictitious names appear, yet the experiences were real.

The story is a phase of that vast, westward sweep across our continent, which, in three centuries, carried Americans from Plymouth Rock to the Klondike. Beginning in Ohio, the family pioneers in the wheat fields of Saskatchewan, Canada, where most of the action takes place.

CHAPTER I

The little town of Tranquillity was living up to its name so far as John Brown could judge. Coming toward the town on his way to school, John saw no sign of that strong belief in the freedom of the individual which had already made this little Ohio town a station on the Underground Railroad defying the laws of the Nation's Congress. Neither was there apparent to John's eyes any indication of that pride of racial superiority which two decades later was to flame into bold defiance of Ohio State law and give the town headlines in the Nation's news.

Only the preceding week there had been a hot discussion in John's Natural Philosophy class over the question of what happens when an immovable body is struck by another body moving with irresistible momentum. But it had not occurred to the class that something like that was happening in their town; a deep-rooted faith in human liberty conflicting sharply with the no less fixed idea of racial inequality; a conflict accented by the drive of economic pressure. Few were the souls with vision to see in this conflict the coming of a great Civil War almost upon them.

But to John Brown the white steeples of Tranquillity's churches and darker roofs of its homes gleaming in November sunshine and frost, sheltered a peaceful felicity, which fitted well the name of the town. He liked the town folks and found real enjoyment in school. He was in his place some minutes before the last bell rang. Living on a farm four miles out of town, John walked to this new high school each morn-

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

ing. Before this he had attended the one-room country school on Bullskin Creek, near his home. Here he had studied *McGuffey's Readers* and the Webster blue-backed spelling book until he could spell down most of the other children. He had ciphered through *Ray's Part Three in Arithmetic* which was as far as his teacher could take him in that subject.

At Tranquillity, he was studying Grammar and Rhetoric, Natural Philosophy, a sort of glorified beginning science, and was making a start in Algebra. Mr. Carter, the principal, taught all the high school classes and looked with an approving eye on this tall boy from the country who already stood six feet in his stockings. He had been surprised at John's high jump one noon hour when the boys were trying stunts on the playground. John had raised the mark until it came directly under his chin, then stepping back a few paces, had cleared the mark with a running jump. He hoped he might train this youngster to do equally well in study!

"I have an announcement I'd like you all to hear," Mr. Carter said, just before dismissing classes for the noon lunch hour the third Thursday in November. "There is a country school, known as the Gosling district, about three miles out of town, which has not been able to find a teacher this fall. Last winter the big boys drove the teacher out, and the trustees have asked me to find them a teacher for this winter. They will pay thirty dollars a month for four months. If any of you are interested, you can talk to me at noon or after school this evening." No one made any response. It seemed unlikely that any of the students would respond to this challenge.

In the evening after school, John spoke to the principal. "Do you reckon I could manage that school? Could I get a certificate to teach? I know you have to have a certificate because my sister Harriet taught several years before she was

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

married and she had to get one."

His teacher looked at this tall, big-boned young man who had been with him less than three months and smiled encouragingly. Strong, even white teeth were set in a jaw that showed strength of purpose; a straight and prominent nose gave character to the face; and the steady, blue eyes were clear and unafraid.

"I hate to see you leave us, John, but there is no doubt you can get a certificate. All that the examiners expect is for you to be able to read and write, answer a few questions in geography, cipher as far as the Rule of Three, and have a good, moral character. I know because I am one of the three examiners."

"I guess I could get through all those things," said John.

The principal nodded. "I've noticed that when you once take hold of a knotty problem you don't let go easily. Think you could straighten out those older boys and girls?"

"At least, I would like to try," said John. To tell the truth, he rather enjoyed the prospect of such a battle. A few days later he began his first day of teaching. Years afterward John's children never tired of listening to the story of that first day of school.

"I was only eighteen, but I was big and strong. On the way to school I cut me a hickory gad, longer than my arm, the kind we used to drive oxen with. When I rang the bell the school children came in and went to work on their books. Most of the younger ones only had a speller; but the older children had their arithmetics, and a few had well-worn *McGuffey's Readers*."

"I said to them, we will have only one rule in this school, and it is short enough for the youngest child to remember! Some of the older children grinned as if they thought, 'This teacher is going to be easy. Guess he knows we are going to break all the rules he can make.' But they stopped grinning when they heard my rule; just two words, 'Do Right.' It kept

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

me busy hearing them all spell and read and sharpening their quill pens when it came time to write."

"Ella Barlow, the biggest girl, who was seventeen or eighteen years old, began to act smart. She laughed and whispered and bothered the children around her. Once in a while she would mutter something under her breath. I waited until the morning recess, then sent the other children out, and told Ella to stay until I heard her recite her lesson. She said she had just come to school to visit, and didn't want to recite. But I gave her a book and pointed out a page for her to read. She began to cry, dared me to touch her, and said she was going home. I grabbed my hickory gad, got between her and the door, and told her to open the book and read. She cried louder and said her brother Bill would come to school and take care of me; but when I raised my stick she opened the book and began to read. After a few lines I told her to close the book, get her bonnet and go home, and if she or her brother Bill ever came back and tried to upset my school, that hickory stick would be waiting for them. I never heard from either of them again, though some of the neighbors told me that Bill was looking for me with a big knife."

"I remember how my school director laughed when he met me on the road one evening after I had straightened Ella out. He told me I was the kind of teacher they wanted. He figured the big boys and girls would never lock me out, and they never did."

John's skill in controlling big boys and girls soon gave him good standing as a country teacher; but terms were short and the pay very low. After teaching two or three winters he entered the Business College in Cincinnati. They granted him a good sheepskin diploma when he had finished the course in Single and Double Entry Bookkeeping in this college which he had

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

framed and later hung upon the walls of his home. His children used to look with great admiration on the beautiful penmanship which adorned this diploma and its glittering gilded frame. They imagined that this shining gold frame was a token that their Dad had been a very bright scholar. This diploma was the high water mark of his formal education.

John's mother heard with much amusement the story of the set-to he had had with Ella Barlow. She herself had come into conflict with John. Ellen Penn's keen dark eyes were not the steady blue of John's eyes. They were bright and quick, and looked very black as she heard John tell about his first day of teaching.

"Some day my big boy is going to run into a woman who will teach him some things he will find it hard to swallow," she said to her husband, William.

"He'll be lucky not to have more than one woman at a time trying to teach him something," muttered William, being careful not to say it loud enough to interrupt his wife's train of thought.

"You know," said Ellen with her mind still on her topic, "I quit trying to force John to do anything he did not want to do when he was twelve years old. He was big and strong for his age then, and one day, when I started to use a peach tree switch on him for something he had done, he grabbed my hands and held them. I believe I was never so mad in my life. I thought I would burst. I tried to kick him and bite him, but he just looked at me and grinned and I began to cry. Then he let me loose but I was too weak by that time to do anything but cry."

"Yes," answered William, "and I remember you cried for a week, something I never knew you to do before or since. Be jabbers, it felt like a funeral around the house that week and got on all our nerves. Finally, I went to John and begged him to

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

go to you and say he was sorry."

"He said it and meant it," said John's mother "but I never tried to punish him again. He really is a good boy and doesn't need much correction, though when he sets his head he's hard to turn. Some day, I guess, he'll learn that a woman does not always quit when she gives in."

William Brown, whose English-Irish ancestry sometimes led him to think of things not wise to say made no rejoinder. Perhaps he was thinking of that morning in the early days of their marriage when Ellen had thrown one of the breakfast plates at him in reply to some remark he had made. He did not need to be told that Ellen had plenty of temper.

It was in the second school that he taught that John came to know Della Redding. She was the daughter of the richest man in the district, Uncle Billy Redding, as everyone called him. Uncle Billy had accumulated his wealth by hard work and in-born shrewdness. He could neither read nor write; but he needed no pencil to figure the profits in any transaction, and he rarely figured himself on the losing end.

Blonde Della was a lively girl and full of fun, only a year older than John. She persuaded her mother and Uncle Billy to offer the school teacher their home for a boarding-place, which he gratefully accepted. In those days the teacher was entitled to board around in the homes of his pupils, generally spending a week with each family. This free boarding was an item to be considered, when thirty dollars a month was top pay for country school teachers. At Della's suggestion, Uncle Billy put the cost of board lower to John than he would have done to most folks, so the young man felt that this nominal expense was a good investment. In boarding 'round, the teacher sometimes paid a high cost in digestive power for the free eating he was furnished.

"You see, Pappy," Della said to Uncle Billy when she

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

broached this matter to him, "Mother and I are both very good cooks, and the fine meals we get ready are almost always too much for us three. Now a nice young man on the other side of the table would save a lot of waste." Uncle Billy nodded; he was shrewd enough to see what Della meant without further coaxing.

So John came to board at the Reddings, and he and Della had lots of fun. There were corn huskings, spelling bees, sleigh rides and country dances and John made a fine escort.

At the close of this first winter in the Redding district, John put a proposition up to his own father. "Now, Pappy," he offered after some thought, "I'll soon be twenty-one, and can go out each summer as a hired man and work for the neighbors. But if you'll let me manage the home farm, with you and brother George working alongside as usual, I'll turn back as much crop as we had last year, and take for my wages what we make over and above that amount."

William Brown was an easy going man. He thought it would be nice to keep this big son of his as a partner on the farm and agreed to the plan. John put enormous energy into his share of the job. No quitting early to fish and swim in the Ohio. No long noon hours to escape the hot noon-day sun. The corn and tobacco crops were about twice as big as they usually were. George, who was only twenty-two months younger than John, began to complain.

"John's drivin' us like he was an overseer on a nigger plantation. I can take as much hard work as any one, but I'm nobody's slave, and I'm going to take time off to go a fishin' whether he likes it or not," George said to his mother. The July sun was hot on the tobacco field, and the blue ribbon of the Ohio lay enticing and cool not more than a mile away.

"I don't blame you, George," said Ellen. "Your Pappy never got us up so early and worked us till dark on these long

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

summer days. The whole family are ready to revolt at the way John wants us to work."

The crisis came in August, when John would not let his father sell the potato crop when he wanted to, but said they must hold it for better prices. Easy going William lost his temper completely but John stood fast to his bargain. Finally, when all the family refused longer to obey his orders, they compromised on a cash settlement which gave John a very satisfactory return for his summer of hard work.

This effort had left him little time to play the gallant to Della and when he returned to his school in autumn he found that another young man had been paying her much attention. While John plowed corn and hoed tobacco, this young chap had been taking Della to picnics and dances. Competition between the two young men became very strong that winter, and John felt greatly put out that Della should act a bit undecided.

John liked to tease but he could not stand it to be teased. So, he was petulant when Della said to him, "Sam Kidwell's new buggy horse sure can travel. He took me down to Neville the other evening, and we made it in about one-fourth the time it takes Pappy to drive it. Why don't you get a fast trotter, too?" John replied hotly, "Guess I'm not in such a hurry to get there, when I'm going some place with you, Della, as Sam Kidwell seems to be."

But Della was in a teasing mood and she did not heed the storm signal that came in the quick flush that colored John's cheeks. "I wonder where this big boy thinks he is going with me?" she thought to herself. "Well, it's high time he made up his mind." Aloud she continued to prod him. "I sure would like to see you two boys drive a horse race some day. Guess I'd find it hard to make up my mind which one to bet my money on. I'm not much of a judge of horseflesh."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

But John could not adapt himself to this teasing mood. "You know how hard I work, Della, to get my money. We Methodist church folks don't hold much with horse racing, anyway." Then he went on to tell her about the bargain he had driven that summer with his Pappy and how hard he had worked to make it good. "I had to stand up against the whole family at the end, but I wouldn't let them back me down," he finished.

Della listened gravely enough. She was wondering if there might come times when John would not let her back him down either, no matter how she might struggle to do so.

A few nights afterward coming early from school, he overheard Della telling this story to her other swain; and they both laughed immoderately at John's stubbornness. John was deeply hurt, and he and Della quarreled bitterly. Doubts grew in his mind. Uncle Billy was shrewd but uneducated; the current gossip said that he had married below his own station. Looking at Della's mother he wondered if the girl would grow more like her mother as she grew older.

John's older sister, Eliza, was curious about his break with Della, but all she could get out of him was some very cryptic remarks.

"If a girl's mother has a face like a horse, what can you expect the girl to look like when she is forty?"

"Why, John," said Eliza, "I never heard you talk that way about Della Redding before. What's happened to you two?"

"There's plenty happened," said John bitterly. "No girl can make fun of me to another man and get away with it. That's all I've got to say." Eliza saw that he was quite disgusted and gave up the discussion.

"I'll tell you what I am thinking of doing, Eliza." John went on to outline a plan that had evidently been forming in his mind. "As soon as my school closes I'm going to take a steam-

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

boat trip. Think I'll go down the Ohio and maybe on down to New Orleans. Pappy took me down with him on a flat-boat when I was about fourteen and we came home on a steamboat. I always wanted to make that trip again; but flat-boats are too slow these days. This time I'll travel with a little more speed and maybe stay awhile."

Soon he was on his way, caught in that drift to the great West, which pulled hard at so many Americans. Riding on one of the great river boats of that generation gave one a kaleidoscopic picture of history in the making. John enjoyed every minute. Among the passengers was a farmer returning from Cincinnati to his home in Missouri. This Caleb Danvers struck up a conversation with John.

"You goin' all the way to New Orleans, Bub?" said this friendly Westerner.

"I'm not sure yet how far I'll go. I'm really looking for a job. Got sort of tired farming Ohio hills and thought I'd see how it looked farther south."

"Well," drawled Caleb, "if you're lookin' for a job better come along with me. I'm clearing up a new farm in Missouri and I need a husky chap like you seem to be. You say you've been raised on a farm."

John admitted that he had had plenty of farming experience and, after some talk, bargained with Mr. Danvers to go on with him and take the job on his place. It proved very much like farming in Ohio with one exception. For the first time he came into contact with slave labor. John had not formed any very strong convictions in regard to this institution of the South. Mr. Danvers had no slaves but he talked of buying some and began to think John would make a good overseer. Many of his neighbors had large plantations with many field hands as well as household servants. But the whole idea was repulsive

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

to this young man from a Methodist home in a state where all slavery was forbidden by law. Some way he felt he could not face his mother as a slave overseer.

As the turmoil over slavery deepened, the question became especially hot in Missouri, settled by both Free Soilers and Southerners. The papers were full of stories of trouble between the two factions.

After a few months of this experience, John decided that he belonged in the North. Perhaps he was homesick. Mr. Danvers was sorry to lose such a good farm hand but the farm work had slackened and he let John go, urging him to come back next summer.

Teaching school another winter and following this with his training at the Cincinnati Business College, John decided to go into business for himself. Gathering together all the money he had been able to save, he bought out a grocery in the town of Tranquillity where he had gone to school. Here he settled down, as he thought, to the life of a broken-hearted bachelor, whose only ambition was to make money. In reality he had only opened another volume in his informal education, a volume dealing with the age-long theme of woman-kind, for here he met Sallie Richards.

Sallie had been a high school student until John opened his grocery store on the diagonal corner from her home. Soon afterward she seemed to lose interest in her studies. The principal of the high school came to see her father and assured him Sallie had been such an excellent student, they were sorry to see her marks drop off. Grandfather Richards promised to do his best.

So after the supper dishes were cleared and Sallie had seated herself at the front window with a book in her hand, he spoke as sternly as he could, "Sarah Ann!" Her father gen-

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

erally called her Sarah, but when he addressed her as Sarah Ann, Sallie knew she must watch her step. "Sarah Ann, what's this tale your school teacher tells me, about you not keeping up with your studies?"

"I don't know, Father." Sallie spoke very meekly with long lashes veiling her dark eyes. "I expect it is all this talk about war. You know how all the town has been stirred up over the Presidential election. Things keep running through my head when I try to study."

"Things!" said her father sharply, "What kind of things?" At the same time he knew the futility of his question. What father had ever known what things were running through the head of a pretty daughter?

"Oh," said Sallie lightly, "things like the chorus we girls sang in that big political rally the Republicans held last September. 'Link on, girls, to Lincoln, like our mothers did to Clay.' Father, now that Mr. Lincoln has been elected will he free all the slaves, and will he call our boys all to war, to fight the South?"

"Who can guess what the outcome will be?" said her father sadly. "If Lincoln does not free the slaves, some of us who worked so hard for his election will sure be disappointed." Sunk in dejection he stared at the open fire, unseeing, forgetful of his daughter and her problems. Before his mind's eye passed a line of dusky faces, slaves whom he had sheltered and helped escape into Canada, along the "underground railroad." This tall, black-haired man, with the face of a Hebrew prophet, had listened to the voice of his conscience, though it meant defying the law and risking his own life and property.

Suddenly he arose and strode up and down before the fire. "War is a dreadful thing. Here we are only a few miles from the Ohio River, just across the river lies Kentucky, a slave-

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

holding state. What will happen if we go to war? Not only our young men will be called to the army, but our homes will be invaded and our farm lands ravaged. Old and young will suffer terribly, how terribly few of us stop to think. Lincoln has said he will not begin a war. We must all pray that peace may abide in this land, that war shall not come." He had forgotten Sallie and her school problems but now he remembered that this was not a political discussion he was supposed to be holding with his daughter.

"Please promise me, Sarah, that you will try to go back to your school work, and give your teachers no more cause to complain. I'm not used to that sort of thing, and it worries your mother. Put those other 'things' out of your head until you finish school."

"Yes, Father," said Sallie earnestly, who had rarely seen her father so stirred. "Yes, I'll do my best to try to please my teachers and you. Now let me get my pen and I'll begin to write that English composition that was assigned for tomorrow."

That tall young man, John Brown, from whom she had often bought groceries recently, had often interfered with study. She was afraid her promise to her father was hopeless.

Not that John had said much to her as yet. The first day she had appeared in his store as a customer, he had found himself thinking, "There's a girl whose face will never make you think of a horse, even when she's forty." Hastily calling his thoughts back to the task of weighing coffee and sugar, John tried to think of something friendly to interest this young school girl.

"You're Sallie Richards, aren't you? I saw you at the Methodist Church with your father, Sunday night."

"Yes, how did you know my name? I nearly always go to the Methodist Church." Turning, she pointed across the street.

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

"There's where I live."

"Oh," said John, "everyone in town knows your father's name, Richards, because he runs that big dry goods store. My mother's maiden name was Richards, too. I believe she and your father were cousins, making us distant cousins of some sort."

"I never could keep track of all Father's relatives, so no doubt you are right," said Sallie demurely.

John grinned at a sudden recollection. "The other day a little colored girl came into the store dragging a still smaller boy by the hand. They both were black as night and the boy not bigger than a minute. I said to the girl, 'Is that boy your brother?' 'No,' she replied, 'he's my cousin!' 'Is he your first cousin?' I asked, to tease her. 'No, Mistah, he's my last cousin,' she said, staring at me in surprise."

Sallie laughed uncertainly. Was this young man trying to be fresh, or merely friendly? Deciding on the latter, she took her coffee and sugar and went out.

John had already noticed Sallie on her way to school, and had admired her erect carriage and quick step.

It was the deepening interest that grew from such casual encounters that had interfered with Sallie's lessons. John was deliberate by nature, but soon he was walking home with Sallie from church or taking her to an occasional party. The Southern states were seceding. War clouds were looming and John and Sallie were driven by doubts. She told her father she might as well quit school and stay home to help her mother who was not at all well. When Lincoln's inauguration was followed by the firing on Fort Sumter, excitement ran high in Tranquillity.

At Lincoln's call for volunteers, many of the young men of the town enlisted. "You will not need to go, John, will you?" Sallie asked anxiously. "Someone will have to stay and run the

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

stores and farms."

John had debated this with himself very seriously. All the money he had saved had gone into this store and he hated to lose it. But deeper still was his dislike of war. When he was seventeen years old he had been deeply touched by a sermon preached during a revival in the Methodist church in McKendre. In the Methodist phrase of the day he had been converted and given his heart to his Redeemer. This had been a very real experience to John and he could not reconcile it with the thought of killing his fellow men.

"No," he replied to Sallie's question. "I think I will not enlist now. Maybe the time will come when I shall have to go. I guess some folks will think I'm afraid, but I think James Russell Lowell was right when he said:

"Ez fer war, I call it murder,
There you have it plain and flat;
I don't want to go no furder
Than my Testymont fer that."

"My father dreads war, too; he was saying the other day how dreadful it would be to fight with our neighbors just across the Ohio River," said Sallie with vivid recollection of her father's face as he pictured the border warfare that threatened them.

"I guess we would have some very hot times here in Southern Ohio," John answered. "Some of those Kentucky slave owners will be glad to get a chance to even things up with the chaps who have been running the Underground Railroad in this section of the country. Maybe they'll wish they had obeyed the Fugitive Slave law and kept us out of this war."

John was treading on slippery ground. Just a few nights before this, Sallie's fifteen year old brother had shown that this Richards' tribe had plenty of temper. A group of idlers sitting

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

around the stove in the Richards' store, had seen the sudden flare-up, when one of their number had spoken in the same vein, criticizing the "Railroaders." The man had gone a little too far, calling Sallie's father a dirty name when he protested against such sentiments. The heavy stove poker, wielded by the husky fifteen year old, descended promptly on the speaker's head in answer to this epithet. Only the thickness of the man's skull saved the boy from landing in serious trouble.

At John's hint of criticism, Sallie was about to speak out in her father's defense; but what good would it do to quarrel with John and perhaps drive him on to enlist in the army, the last thing she desired. So she said mildly, "I wish you could hear my mother talk against war. I believe she hates it worse than father does."

"I've talked to your mother about this war," was John's surprising answer. "She came in to my grocery the other day to buy some things and we had quite a chat. There wouldn't be any war if all the world were like your mother. She's my idea of a real Christian."

This earnest tribute to her mother pleased Sallie. It seemed easier to hope that this war between the states need not separate her and John, if it must come. Its thunder was already drowning out most of life's harmonies. Surely, this new and wonderful music that flooded her soul whenever John's personality touched hers, would endure in spite of war.

As July slipped into August, the gloom that had settled on the North after the disaster at Bull Run grew steadily deeper. The usual picnics and summer frolics were replaced by groups of war workers, picking lint or gathering much needed supplies for the army.

The debate in John's mind grew more and more confusing. On one side the danger to his investment in the store added to

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

his horror of war; on the other, were all the arguments for national unity. There were plenty of other men equally confused. Had not that idol of Northern democracy, Horace Greely, urged Lincoln to let the South go her own way?

But John's confusion had a particular slant, a growing passion, that made separation from Sallie harder and harder to contemplate. She seemed so lovely and young, and he could not bear to hurt her. Fear that his personal desires were overwhelming his judgment made him very jumpy. He grew silent in her presence, and almost seemed to avoid her; a matter Sallie felt she should remedy but did not know how to go about it. There was needed but a spark to touch off this tinder box, and Della Redding furnished that spark.

Della was still unmarried and near enough to Tranquillity to know what was going on. Quite often this summer and fall she had been coming into John's grocery and renewing their old friendship, in her own way. "I hear folks saying you have a new girl, John. Sallie's very fine-looking, I think. Can't blame you for finding her a lot more attractive than the Union Army." She bought a few groceries and went on her way. The news of the Federal defeat of *Ball's Bluff* had just been made public.

A week later John called on Sallie and sitting in the moonlight in her father's garden, they had it out.

"It's no use talking, Sallie," said John, as they tried to face what the future held for them both. "I can't go on having folks say I am dodging the army. It is easy for you to quote your mother, that it takes a lot of courage to be a Jeremiah and stand against popular opinion; but that's not what other folks say."

Sallie flamed out at last. "What 'other folks,' John? Why don't you come out plain and name Della Redding? I heard that she gave you a round-up the other day. What you mean is that you care more for what she thinks than you do for me."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

John's face grew stern and cold. "You'll live to regret that speech, Sallie, because you know it isn't true. I know I have given you good reason to think I wanted you to marry me soon. But no man nor woman can drive me into war nor keep me out, if I feel I ought to go. I must decide for myself, and take my own time for deciding." He turned abruptly toward the garden gate.

"Stop, John," cried Sallie. "I'm sorry I said what I did about Della. I know it isn't true. You have a right to your own decisions."

John turned and looked long at her, then swept her into his arms. They were married at Sallie's home, as that first year of war ended.

One incident of the wedding Sallie was fond of relating when she felt like teasing John. "After the wedding ceremony and congratulation, I noticed John's face getting very red, and he hung back of me a little, as we moved toward the dining room. 'What's the matter?' I whispered. 'Don't I manage my train all right, even if I never wore one before?' 'It's not that,' John said. 'I wish it were longer and I could keep my feet under it. I forgot to put on my wedding shoes and my boots are all covered with mud. I thought I looked so spic and span'."

It certainly seemed that John had looked into a volume of his informal education likely to be very charming.

A few days before the wedding Sallie had asked, "Where shall we go on our honeymoon, John?"

"Honeymoon?" echoed John, caught quite unprepared for this sequel to a wedding, but not willing to admit he hadn't thought of it. "When my grandpappy Robert and grandmother Ruth got married at her home over in Kentucky, their honeymoon was a trip across the Ohio River. Many a time I've heard grandpappy tell about it. He had laid claim to his daddy's share

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

of the Virginia Military Lands and they were crossing the Ohio to build a log cabin on Big Indian Creek, where the flour mill is now. How would you like that kind of a honeymoon?"

"I guess that trip wasn't a lot of fun for your grandmother Ruth. Was there a ferry boat on the River then?" asked Sallie.

"No, I've heard grandfather tell how they crossed on a raft with his one horse swimming alongside and grandmother and her precious featherbed and the baby proudly riding on the raft."

"The baby? What was a baby doing on the honeymoon?" demanded Sallie.

"Oh, I forgot to say they had to wait two years after the wedding before Uncle Sam would say O.K. to Robert's claim. He lived with Ruth's folks those two years. Guess we'll have to think about a place to live as well as a honeymoon." John was voicing a matter to which he had already given some troubled thought; but Sallie had this all planned.

"I've a surprise for you, John darling. My father is willing to deed us that little brick cottage he owns on the next corner and we can set up housekeeping there. Isn't that fine? Oh, my goodness, don't drop me!" John's answer had been to swing Sallie up to the ceiling and hold her there. Vigorous action came easier to him than grateful words.

"And have you got the honeymoon all planned, too?" he inquired, as he stood her on her feet again.

"No, but here's a thought just came to me. Instead of crossing the Ohio River on a raft, like your grandfather and grandmother did sixty years ago, let's take a river trip on a steamboat. Oh, not a long one," she hastened to add, knowing John's finances would not permit careless spending, even for a honeymoon. "Mother wants us to have the infare here at home; and we could just go to Cincinnati on the Katomah, stay all night

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

and come back the next day."

John was happy with this arrangement. The River had a place in his heart next to Sallie's. When he was a little chap of four or five, his father had bought the hill farm overlooking the Ohio; soon the great river with its stretches of sandy beach became his playground.

So when they went aboard the Katomah the morning after the wedding, John was full to overflowing with praise for the Ohio and recollections of boyhood pranks and feats of prowess. Sallie listened but it was evident her mind was more on the furniture she expected to choose and new carpet and curtains for the little brick cottage.

At the end of a long recital John concluded, "So I and Pappy sold our flat-boat and all the wheat and tobacco we had aboard in New Orleans. We rode back to Cincinnati in style on the steamboat, Morning Star. She sank the next summer after a boiler explosion."

"John," contributed Sallie thoughtfully, "I love to hear all these stories about your boyhood on the River. Do you think light walnut chairs with cane seats will be better for our parlor than heavy chairs covered with hair cloth, like Father and Mother have in their big room?"

John was a little dazed by this sudden leap from the river to parlor furniture but he made the jump successfully. Sallie was so lovely! Surely, one should be ready for anything on a honeymoon. Had he not bragged much of his ability to jump high!

CHAPTER II

A hot June night, 1863. Along Rat Row, the euphonious epithet applied to Tranquillity's main street, the village loafers sat in chairs tilted back against the closed stores. They had put in a long session after supper, fighting in imagination Grant's campaign around Vicksburg, where for weeks their more valiant brothers had, in grim reality, been overwhelmed in Mississippi mud and malaria or died under Confederate gunfire. There had been some added excitement tonight over a threat closer home, a rumor that a body of swift cavalry under Morgan were about to invade Indiana and Ohio. Now the sticky heat of the mid-summer day gave way slowly to the cooling night breeze. Having worn conjecture threadbare, some of the gossiping crowd began to stretch and wonder if bed rooms would be cool enough for sleep, when Doc Gillespie stumbled wearily into a vacant chair.

"Hey Doc, where've ye been?" called Cy Johnson, "we missed ye. Needed yer judgment to decide how the war's goin'."

Dr. Gillespie sighed and fanned his perspiring face. "I've been working like a beaver to bring old man Richards' first grandchild into the world. Sallie Richards—Sallie Brown she is now, is sure a plucky girl, and now she's the mother of an eight pound daughter. "Gee," said one loafer, "bet John Brown is proud as a peacock, even if he did say sure his first born would be a boy." Then he added to some of his cronies, "Say fellers, we want to be durn good and ready fer him, when he comes to open his grocery in the mornin'." "I sure don't want to tackle

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Big John Brown by myself," added another. There followed a few moments of whispered conspiracy and the last loiterers drifted off to bed.

John Brown felt very jubilant that next morning. "I've heard my mother tell of the seven beautiful Penn sisters famous in southern Ohio a couple of generations ago," he boasted to Sallie. "I'll bet our little Inez here will give all the pretty gals a mark to shoot at. And don't you like the name Inez, uncommon as well as lovely?"

Too drowsy to answer, Sallie lay quiet, while John cleared his breakfast dishes. A few moments later she stirred sleepily. "What on earth are you rummaging through that cupboard for, John? I'll be able to hunt things for you in a few days."

"A few days will be too late," said John. "I need it this morning. Here it is, this old straw hat I wore last summer. Guess you wouldn't know, but it's an old custom here to snatch off a man's hat and burn it the first time he goes out as a Daddy. I've had fun that way myself, so I'm sure they'll be waiting for me. Instead of putting up much of a fight, I'll fool 'em, by wearing this old ragged straw."

John went out laughing to himself, and came home soon after, highly pleased to have maintained his dignity as a new Daddy, without a fist fight.

But before Inez was four weeks old a sterner clash came between John and his neighbors. Morgan's raid had grown from rumor to reality. His fast riding cavalry was daily expected to cross the Ohio and sweep around Cincinnati. As soon as they should come above the city the little town of Tranquillity would lie open to Confederate ravages. Dreadful tales were told of these raiders equal to the Indians if one could rely on hearsay. Flags that had flaunted themselves over the homes and stores in Tranquillity fluttered quickly down, all but one. Over John

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Brown's grocery the Stars and Stripes still flew defiantly. Neighbors hurried to him. "John, you must take your flag down. All the rest of us have. We don't want Morgan to burn the whole town."

John stood his ground. "Some of you thought it odd I did not go to war. I won't run into a fight, neither will I run from a fight. My flag is up to stay and I'll shoot any man who tries to haul it down."

The neighbors shook their heads at this stubbornness; but two nights later John shouldered his gun and marched with his neighbors to repel Morgan's men, who were said to be crossing the Ohio that night. He could not stand still and wait for raiders to march against his home. This however was a false alarm. Morgan did dash across another part of the county before his men were defeated and he, himself was locked up in the State Penitentiary; but the little town of Tranquillity rested once more in quietness.

"Aren't you glad, John," Sallie said after the trouble was over, "that we didn't do like Cousin Nackey and eat up all our preserves and jellies to keep Morgan's men from getting them. Now we'll have preserves for next winter."

Soon John began to find the life of a country storekeeper very irksome. "It's a picayune business," he complained to Sallie. "I wait half an hour for a customer and in comes little Betsy Brittenham and demands two cents worth of candy. I stand ten minutes waiting for her to decide which two pieces she wants and sink into a chair exhausted by the struggle. As she slams the door, in pops Old Lady Kleinkopf and wants a dime's worth of sauerkraut. While I am dishing it into her bucket, she eats three cents worth of crackers from the cracker barrel. In three-quarters of an hour I've sold twelve cents worth of stuff with a net loss of a cent and a half. Yesterday stingy

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Angus McDuff wanted to trade me what he claimed was a fresh-laid egg for a darning needle."

"Oh, it isn't that bad," laughed Sallie. "You know you often sell a barrel of sugar or an entire ham to one customer, and make a fair profit too."

"Well," said John, "the truth is, I am tired of this job and would like to go back to farming where a man can be really active all day. More important, I can see that war prices are going to jump ahead fast for farm products." So it came about that John traded his grocery stock and their brick cottage to his father-in-law for the farm which had been Sallie's childhood home. Soon they were established in its white cottage in the shadow of Calvary Methodist Church.

On the first Sabbath after this move, as they walked sedately down the aisle of the church, they were a striking looking couple. Sallie wore a fashionable, full hoop-skirt of beautiful brown satin, flecked with dots of gold like sunlight, with a dainty bodice of the same material. Her smoothly combed hair under its stylish bonnet, and her glowing dark eyes outshone the lovely sheen of her dress. Her erect carriage and graceful walk had been patiently taught to her by a French aunt, Leontine Lakin, who had lived in Sallie's home many years. No rouge was needed to accent the roses in her cheeks as she returned to this church of her childhood.

John, six feet tall and broad of shoulder, walked at her side carrying his high silk hat, the so-called "stove-pipe" of that day. The dull blue of his well-fitting coat and trousers contrasted nicely with a waistcoat of red satin with tiny black dots. His deep and steady blue eyes looked out over a brown, silky beard, slightly inclined to curl. On his arm he carried their baby girl Inez, whose dark eyes, baby features and hair beginning to curl like her father's, showed a faint resemblance to an old portrait

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

of Admiral William Penn.

The three had hardly settled decorously in a high-back pew on the right hand side of the church, when they were approached by two members of the Official Board, men whose gray hair and dignified bearing bespoke their standing in the neighborhood. It was plain they had an unpleasant duty to perform; but there might have been some doubt whether or not they were also enjoying it.

"Brother Brown," they spoke in low tones and in the friendly Methodist fashion, "since you are a newcomer, you probably do not know that the men folks in our church always sit on the left of the center aisle and the women on the right. So we have come to ask you to move, so our young folks won't get any wrong ideas."

John smiled pleasantly; but there was a set to his jaw that might have warned them that he well knew the strength of the unwritten law he had ventured to break. "Thank you gentlemen, for advising me; but I intend to sit here with my wife or go somewhere else to church."

Not being prepared to take such positive measures, the officials beat a retreat. It was not long until other brides were enjoying the company of their husbands during the Sunday sermon. Sallie felt embarrassed at John's attitude. "John, let's not make our new neighbors feel cross at us right when we're getting a start in this new community." Then candor compelling her, she conceded; "But I guess I'd have been much more embarrassed if you had moved when they told you to."

It amused John to hear his wife argue both sides of the question so adroitly. He stated the rule he had set for himself. "I'll not run into a fight, neither will I run from one. The church can command my loyalty and my services but not my blind obedience."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

For many years he was a trustee of the church and a member of its Official Board. When the old building was replaced by a new one, John donated the site for the new church.

Knowing that he was a teacher, since John now supplemented his summer farming with winter teaching, his neighbors elected him superintendent of the Sunday School. Saturday afternoons generally found him at the church preparing the program for Sunday. He took colored chalk and outlined on a blackboard the Golden Text of tomorrow's lesson with beautiful block letters in two or more colors, large enough to be seen all over the church. This text was illustrated with a carefully drawn picture appropriate to the thought. He well knew that people learn more readily through the eye than through the ear and that bright colors fascinate all of us.

Grandfather Richards had built the story and a half white frame house where John and Sallie spent nearly two decades of married life. It had been home for Sallie in the years of her early girlhood, so she was very much pleased to come back to it; but as the family grew John felt the need of more room.

The family did grow! Eight more children came to them, and though three died in infancy, the house seemed always full. My own first memories are bright with pictures of its gayly frescoed parlor, its breezy dining room with double doors opening into the yard where the children's swing hung from high locust trees. There was a garden with fragrant red Astrachan apples, lovely, but not half so lovely as the soft roses in Sallie's cheeks, as she walked there with me, her oldest boy. Sallie and John were Mother and Daddy to me and to the boys and girls who filled the house.

Sometimes they seemed to us hardly more than boy and girl themselves. One vivid memory of a hot July day after a hard summer rain still stirs laughter; John chasing Inez through

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

the soft mud of the cornfield that stood next to our dooryard. He was barefooted with long bare shanks and trousers rolled above his knees. He held a captive frog and was trying to get Inez to be friends with it. She ran and dodged and pretended great fright chiefly for the benefit of us younger ones. This older daughter was developing some willful ways which she may have inherited from her Daddy.

John was fond of pointing out to Sallie some of the flaws of their home in addition to its lack of room for their growing family. This gave him a good chance to tease.

"You know Sallie, it is a lot harder on you to live so near the church. Preachers like to come here for Sunday dinner and to stay all night when revival meetings are going on. This is the first place they head for when the sermon is done. If we were two or three miles farther away, we could skip a lot of that trouble."

Sallie knew that he was teasing but preachers could be a nuisance when the house was full of babies. "Now, John, not many of them are like the one who came that terrible snowy night last winter, ate a big supper, pulled off his boots and sat by our fire drying his woolen socks until he fell asleep. Remember how he suddenly woke up, saw his boots standing near him, and mistook them for one of our babies? He must have been half asleep still, for he shoved his boots aside crossly, saying, 'Stand aside, sissy.' I thought you had insulted him when you laughed so loud, but he stayed on for breakfast, just the same."

"Methodist preachers are very good company generally, but you can have too much of a good thing. A few days ago a man came to see me about selling the field between our house and the pike for a new cemetery. The old one is getting filled up, but I told him we didn't want another grave-yard still closer."

Sallie agreed. She was unwilling to reduce the size of the farm, as John was always wishing for more land. None of his

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

fields were big enough to suit him and they had lost much of their virgin fertility. Commercial fertilizers had not come into fashion.

"Bob," he predicted to one of his neighbors, "I'm going to put that ten-acre field next to your place in oats and raise me four hundred bushels of feed."

"Must think you're out in Indiana in that black prairie country," scoffed Big Bob. "You'll be lucky to raise one hundred bushels on that worn out ten acres."

"You'll see," bragged John. "I'll do it if I have to pour a barrel of sweat into every acre."

It seemed that the latter half of his boast would come true first. John amazed his neighbors by hauling, in one week, fifty wagon loads of rich humus from our old woodyard to the field before he sowed the oats. Sweat soaked his clothes as he finished each day's stint. Often he finished the milking and feeding by moonlight. But the harvest fulfilled the first half of his prediction. Big Bob acknowledged defeat and helped John and another six-footer cradle the entire ten acres in one day, causing Bob to grunt at the end of the gruelling strain, "Never thought ye c'd do it, John. Mebbe Indianny land isn't much better than some we have in Ohio."

Mother did not mind the fact that our house was not far from Old Calvary graveyard. Many people buried there had been very dear to her; neighbors, uncles, aunts, mother and two of her own babies who had been such a few days in her arms. Her father was laid there the summer they built the new church. These folks would protect her, not harm her. Sometimes when business kept John away from home for a long afternoon and Sallie was alone in the house except for three or four little children, she dreaded the tramps who sometimes came begging and leering to her door. Their home stood so

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

near the new highway, the Tranquillity Pike. If twilight fell and John had not come, Sallie often took the children and walked in the cemetery among the dead, until she heard John's wagon rattling over the culverts on his way home, and she and the children could go to meet him.

One hot week in August, Paul, their two-year old boy, was stricken with what seemed some childish ailment. Father's strength was restful to us children in times of illness, and he held this blue-eyed baby boy gently on his lap.

"Sallie," he said to Mother, busy with Retta, at that time her youngest child, "do you think I'd better give Paulie another dose of that medicine the doctor left for him? He seems more feverish."

Mother glanced at the clock. "Yes, it has been four hours, and the doctor said he should have a dose every four hours until he shows improvement." Father spoke slowly. "I'm a little doubtful; the last dose seemed rather strong for a baby. But I guess we'd better follow the doctor's advice." He administered a carefully measured dose. The child swallowed with fretful cries. A pallor overspread his face; he smiled once at Father and was gone.

Sudden agony twisted Father's throat so that he could not speak. He laid Paulie on the bed. Mother fell on her knees praying and weeping; then seeing the unspoken agony in Father's twisted face, she rose and flung herself into his arms. She cried, "John, John, don't look so. We did our best."

Father groaned, "I gave him the medicine," and put her gently beside Paulie, saying as he strode toward the open doorway; "I'll never really trust a doctor again."

It seemed to us children our home was too far from old Turkeyfoot School. Father said it was less than a mile; but we found good reasons for making it seem more than two miles.

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

Cousin Nackey Richards said to Mother one day, "Sallie, you should do something about that second girl of yours, Nancy."

"What's the matter with Nancy?" demanded Mother. "She's being teased all the way to school by her big sister Inez, and teased all the way home by the big boys. She takes everything so much to heart. I heard Inez say to her the other day, 'Look, Nancy, put your foot down here in the dust. See how flat your footprint is. You're a flatfoot!' Then she laughed and ran away and left Nancy crying. Inez is always jumping the creek and leaving Nancy to cry on the other side. Then the boys run after Nancy and pretend to cut off her curls. Honestly, Sallie, that baby runs the whole mile to school and the mile home, generally crying as well as running."

"Oh dear," Mother said, "I wonder what makes Nancy such a baby. I'll see if John can't do something to make Inez stop teasing. The teacher complained to him the other day that Nancy often came in some minutes late; but he guessed it was because she walks slow."

"She certainly runs hard enough when she passes my house." Cousin Nackey said, "though sometimes in the afternoon she will stop for a drink or a cookie. She's such a nice little thing."

Turkeyfoot School was not only quite a long walk from our house; but we Brown youngsters endured more than our share of teasing partly due to Father's unpopularity. This began in the two successive winters when he taught the Turkeyfoot School. The natural antipathy of children to school teachers was increased by Father's stern discipline. Children who behaved liked him all right, but big boys who wanted to violate rules or waste time found themselves held to strict account. The safest way of getting even seemed to be to sing "John Brown had one little Indian, two little Indians . . . and so on to ten little Indian boys"—or worse, to couple our name with

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

some hateful epithet.

Father found himself in conflict with his neighbors over a bigger matter. From year to year there had been drifting northward into our neighborhood, negro families who had been slaves. We were close enough to Kentucky to have sharp racial feeling. When Father found that these freed negroes were being refused homes and work, his sense of justice was aroused. He had recently bought a tract of adjoining farm land, called "the New Ground" because it had lately been cleared of forest growth. He cut some of his New Ground into garden plots and sold them to negro families, who built rude cabins on them and started the business of being free Americans. Some of the neighbors commended him but many others raised loud and angry protests.

Most of the negroes were hard working and law abiding. The men were good farm hands and Mother used some of the women to help her with her housework. We children found them friendly and fun-loving. Uncle Peter Coleman was our favorite. He was very polite, never forgetting his slave training, and looking on Father as his new Massa.

Four year old Dan confided to Mother that when he was old enough to get married, he intended bringing his wife to see Uncle Peter. "You see, Mother, he's so polite, when we go past his cabin he bows until his long white hair almost touches the ground. Then he calls out, 'Howdy, Big Massa, and how's de little massa dis hot mawnin.' I sure want my wife to see Uncle Peter and see him bow to me like I was a king or something."

But soon Father had to admit there might be some reason for the protests of his neighbors. Some of the younger generation of these families just out of slavery proved light fingered. The Grailley family had a six foot boy Sam who was suspected of helping himself to an occasional chicken from the white

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

folks' hen roost. One day Father called Sam to him. "Do you know my field of corn next to your cabin, Sam? Someone has been pulling themselves a lot of roasting ears these dark nights. I want you to help me put out some poison."

"Deed, Misteh Brown, I don' know nothin' about it," stammered Sam, glancing with fear and trembling at the paper bag of red poison that Father carried. Sam did not know that it was nothing more than harmless powdered brick-dust that Father had prepared for this occasion.

"Now, Sam, you help me put some of this red stuff into a few of these roasting ears. We'll dust it over them, and that will make whoever has been stealing my corn good and sick."

Sam helped scatter the make-believe poison; but no one ever bothered that field again!

Few in our community were broadminded enough to accept these colored folks as fellow citizens. The majority of the voters insisted on building a separate school for the negro children. On our way to Turkeyfoot we younger children ran past this building in nameless fear, while the older boys hooted or sang ribald songs to express their racial hate. In nearby Tranquillity the town was also finding this a hot question. Their colored population was more numerous and they had built them a two-room school. The town made the city headlines by being the last school in the State to abolish separate schools, their defiance amounting to civil war on a small scale. Part of this bitter feeling fell on Father for selling the negroes homes, and on us children for having such a Daddy.

These were the years when the prairie land of the mid-western states was rapidly being settled by homesteaders. Mother's only sister, Aunt Addie, with her family had moved to Iowa. Father's cousin, Oliver Richards, and his brother Bob, had taken their families in covered wagons to the rich prairie

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

land of central Indiana. We heard much about quarter sections and half sections of deep, fertile soil, that each family might claim under the new homestead law.

Father was ready to join the westward tide; but Mother hung back, with every tendril of her home loving heart. On her side of the argument lay the home and farm, paid for and still comfortable for a growing family; an anchor that Father's love of pioneering and adventure could not quickly drag loose.

Her sister Addie, whose husband had persuaded her to move with her children to unsettled Iowa, died there. They brought her home to the Calvary cemetery; but it was desperately hard to see her stricken husband take his four little girls and go back to pioneering in Iowa.

Big Bob Richards and his wife, Cousin Nackey, were soon back from their venture into Indiana. Bob and Oliver had found the undrained prairies infested with malaria. Here was a giant who picked up these two big men and shook them until their bones rattled. Oliver stubbornly stuck it out; but Bob stood the shakes one summer and then came home. He said he didn't care how rich Indiana soil was, if he had to burn with fever one day and shake with chills the next.

These two events helped hold Mother firm in her tug of war; but Father finally wore her down. "Now, Sallie, "he would say when winter days were cold and dark, "wouldn't you like to be in Texas now where winters are short?" Mother came quickly back. "But John, if winters are shorter, summers must be longer. Remember how wet with sweat you get here in summer?"

"Sweating is good for a person," Father rejoined, "doesn't the Bible say that man must eat his bread in the sweat of his brow?" Mother answered, "Yes, but I'm sure I've seen you wipe enough sweat from your brow right here in Ohio to let you get into Heaven." This was a sly dig at Father. Mother often

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

claimed that any summer day when he got close enough, he was certain to wipe away a stream of perspiration, so she could see how hard he worked.

We children were all on Father's side of the argument. Sure, going out West would be great fun. We eagerly read the adventure stories of that day and pictured ourselves as pioneers. Cousin Oliver's boy Charlie, back to Ohio for a short visit, thrilled us children with stories of his Indiana life, galloping over prairies, following section lines instead of roads. What stirring pictures these strange words brought us! Indiana was the far West to us.

Finally, Father and Mother came to a compromise. They would sell the Calvary farm, and move to a larger one; but not move entirely out of the neighborhood. Soon a neighboring farm was up for sale, and Father put in his bid and got it. More acres, a roomier house, a different school, close enough that we children could run home at noon for lunch. Calvary was still our closest church, in easy driving distance. We thrived like the proverbial pumpkin vine in our new location.

Just across the road in an old stone house lived our nearest neighbors, the Musser family. Even their names intrigued us. Soon we knew them all; Viny, who was really Alvina, Alice, Ella, and Almira the baby. There was a boy Mida, who seemed to have been christened Almida, and Rover, his dog.

There were other names of new neighbors that we found less easy to remember; German names like Groppenbacher, Neftzer, and Schelfp; folks who in their homes still spoke the language and followed the customs of the Fatherland. These new neighbors promptly elected Father school director and supervisor of roads; small honors, but the best they had to offer.

The challenge to Father in this new farm home was plainly what he had been looking for. The first major improvement

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

was the building of a new barn, the biggest barn in the country around. There was plenty of timber for it growing on the farm; hickory, wild cherry, red oak for sills, posts and beams. All these were pinned together with wooden pins. Father hunted up a maul, a set of wedges and a fro and split out white oak clapboards to be used as shingles; a home-made barn, but big and strong.

The next big improvement was to fence the farm. Barbed wire had come into use for this purpose, and soon we had several miles of it strung on strong locust posts. Locust timber, young flourishing trees in big groves, grew so abundantly on the place that we called our biggest field "the locust pasture." In May, that forty acres of locust in full bloom had a fragrance which might well have competed with Florida orange bloom or the apple blossoms of the Shenandoah Valley.

In the next year or two, Father bought more land, the farm across the road. This gave us another barn, a home for a tenant farmer, and more than doubled our acreage; so that now he had a big domain of rolling hill land, reaching from Big Indian to Little Indian Creeks. The Musser family had moved away and our new tenant was Max Kelch and his big family of boys. To help keep the boys busy and to get the benefit of our new barbed wire fence, Father stocked both farms with several hundred head of sheep.

Mother watched these ventures with an anxious eye. "John, aren't you worried about having to borrow so much money? We owe my brother and your two brothers and your niece and two banks and the store and I don't know how many more folks. It scares me to think of it."

"Don't be afraid, Sallie," Father answered. "Just count over what we have got to pay these debts with. No one but you, or maybe your brother, seems to be worried about it. Nobody re-

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

fuses to lend me money. I've always kept my promises and I can get all the credit I want."

Mother quoted a Bible verse from her favorite book, Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. "Therefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." This only angered Father, and she said no more.

But when he had gone on out to his work, she told us children how Father tried to teach her how to swim. "We had been married only a few months when he urged me to go swimming with him in the Ohio River. I had been born on the bank of the River, but had never been in it or any water deep enough to swim in, and I was scared. But he kept on coaxing till I hunted up something to serve as a bathing suit and went with him to try it one summer evening."

"Well, we waded into the water and he laughed at the way I was shaking. 'Why, Sallie,' he said. 'I have been in this old river and across it so much that it's like an old friend. It won't hurt you; just let yourself go and float.' I tried to do as he said; but before I knew it, my head went under, my lungs filled with water and I was scared to death. I really almost drowned before John got me out. He couldn't realize how little I knew about swimming, but we never tried that again."

Confident of his ability to carry a big load, to his other ventures Father now added the greater risk of speculation in tobacco. He installed a tobacco press in a shed room of the new barn and proceeded to buy up crops of tobacco from the neighbors. When the dried tobacco "came into case" it could be handled with no danger of pulverizing, having absorbed much moisture from the air in damp rainy weather. We set a big, empty hogshead under the press; then with me or one of the Kelch boys on our knees in the hogshead, Father handed in the tobacco to us, and we packed it in orderly layers under

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

our knees. When the hogshead was filled, we used the press to pack it much tighter, often as much as a thousand pounds of tobacco in one hogshead. These were hauled to the Ohio River, and sent by steamboat to the tobacco markets at Cincinnati or Louisville.

All the neighbors raised tobacco and depended on it for most of their cash income. They were glad to have Father act as a middleman, and the tobacco companies were quite willing to lend him the money to finance these deals, at least in part. They made sure he carried all the risk!

CHAPTER III

Father expected our new tenant, Max Kelch, and his big family of boys, to help us raise the wonderful crop of tobacco and corn on the two farms that we now owned. Mr. Kelch was not too prepossessing. His mild blue eyes were a little too red and too watery. Tobacco juice had stained his shirt and his patched and faded overalls were more worn in the seat and knees than they were on the thighs. But his promises sounded good.

"Now, Squire," he said to Father, "you don't need to worry. Leave it to the Kelch family. My two boys here, Noah and Moses, are the two best tobacco setters you ever saw. Settin' just seems to come natural to 'em. We can put out all the crop you can find room fer."

The Kelch boys were mostly named after Bible characters. They and Pa Kelch had at once taken to calling Father, Squire Brown. "No, Max," Father said, "I'm not a squire yet. Maybe I'll be elected to that job some day. Just now, being school director and road supervisor takes all the time I can spare from my farming."

"Well, you'd make a good squire," said Max generously, "so we might just as well start callin' you that. Names ought to fit people, says I, and Squire fits you. Now when our oldest boy was born, we'd been havin' a turrible rainy spell, and I says to my wife, says I, 'Let's call him Noah,' he sure come along with the flood."

"That's interesting," said Father, "and why did you call the

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

next boy Moses? He didn't spend forty years leading you through the Wilderness, did he?"

"He, he, he," laughed Max. "That's a good one, Squire. No . . . he was jest a natural baby; but you see, we sorta got him out of the water, too. We was livin' that year just below Shiloh on the Ohio River, and high water come along, and the boy was born jest as the flood got over our door sill. I says to my wife, says I, 'We sure pulled this one out of the river.' So we called him Moses. But here I am, takin' up the mornin' talkin' when I ought ter be out on the hillside plowin'. Git up, boys, off'n that there wagon tongue, and let's git movin'."

We soon found out that talking came as natural to Mr. Kelch as settin' did to the boys. All of them could think up good reasons for resting often. When the June sunshine was hot on our hillsides, Max stayed at home with a lame back, while Father cradled the wheat, fast as Noah and Moses both could bind and shock it after him.

"You sure do get soakin' wet with sweat, Squire," said Noah, as Father straightened up at the end of a long clean swath across the field, pulled a whetstone from his pocket, and began to put a good edge on the blade of his cradle. Both boys had promptly settled down for a rest, while the whetstone sang its cheerful song in Father's fast-moving hands.

"Yes," said Father, glancing at his soaking shirt, "guess I'm as wet as Moses was when they pulled him from the river. I'd like a cool drink, but the water jug is at the other end of the field, in the shade. We'll all have a pull at it when we get around to that corner again."

"I do hope the next swath won't have as many briars in the wheat as this one had. I'm gittin' my hands full of stickers," whined Noah as he poked gingerly with the blade of his pocket knife at the fingers of his left hand. "A day or two more of this

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

and I'll be ready to go to bed with Pa."

"I'm gittin' the same kind of lame back Pa has," lamented Moses. "Don't think I'm goin' to be good fer much tomorrer mornin', and I heerd Pa tellin' bout a man who got sunstruck out in his wheat field last summer."

"Oh, don't be such babies," Father said impatiently. "Nancy helps me in the hot fields and she does not make half the fuss you big boys do. You make me think of the soldier Colonel Higby used to tell about, who ran away from a battlefield that was getting too hot for him. His captain found him hiding behind a tree and yelled to him, 'Come on out and fight! Quit acting like a baby.' 'I wish I was a baby,' blubbered the big coward, 'and a gal baby at that, so I wouldn't ever have to go to war.' "

The point of this tale seemed lost on Moses and Noah. They continued to moan through the long summer day. They claimed to be wonderful tobacco setters but spent so much time telling about it that our crop was late in getting out and much shorter than usual.

Just before the heaviest part of the summer's work came on, Max had a big fuss with his wife and quit the job and the family. Father was left to do the best he could with such feeble help as the boys could give. When the hardest part of the harvest was over Pa Kelch came home to his family, wept copiously over them, and begged for one more chance.

"You know, Squire," he whined, "when a man's got a big family it's his duty to stay with them through thick and thin. Just give me one more chance and you will not be sorry."

Father tried him once more, but soon he was off on another emotional jag and there was nothing to do but get rid of him at the end of the year and replace him with a new tenant. All in all the Kelch family had cost Father a pretty penny with

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

liberal wages for very little work and the disappointment of a poor crop.

At about this time our oldest sister, Inez, was finding trouble in trying to pass the county examination for a teacher's license. Being now about twenty years old, and having had two years in the Tranquillity High School, she wanted to earn some money, and teaching offered almost the only opening we knew about. But Inez was a very poor speller and weak in arithmetic and the county examinations were growing tougher.

Father thought Inez should come back to the elementary school and put some hard work on the common branches, especially spelling and arithmetic. The plan suited Inez, since there were some very nice boys now in our home school. Father was the school director, so it was up to him to select a good teacher for this job. After some looking about he chose the sister of the most influential county examiner.

This new teacher, Miss Pearl Hulington, and her brother arrived at our home the Saturday evening before school began, looking for a place where Miss Pearl could find boarding. Father had just brought home a milk can full of new honey; so Mother had biscuits and honey for supper, and it was soon agreed that Miss Hulington should board with us. Her brother, who had sampled the biscuits and honey very extensively, heartily approved the arrangement. He went home the next morning leaving his sister to begin her school on the following Monday.

Miss Hulington was about Mother's age, but looked younger, not having had the experience of bringing nine babies into the world. She was a friendly person, and we children grew quite fond of her. Finding Retta crying one day, because the child thought she had no shoes suitable to wear on her first trip with Father to Cincinnati, Miss Hulington loaned Retta a pair of her own shoes. In spite of some resulting blisters,

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Retta felt greatly honored. Miss Hulington's deft fingers trimmed a hat for Inez that we all agreed looked better than the one that Inez wanted, but thought too expensive. Nancy found the farm chores which often fell to her lot, far easier when Miss Hulington took an interest in them.

Father, too, seemed to find Miss Hulington charming. They often found time to discuss the news of the world while Mother got the meal on the table. "Now, children," Father would say to us, "let's show Miss Hulington we know how to behave. Don't forget to say 'Thank you' and 'Excuse me.' Be sure your hands and face are clean, and comb your hair before you come to meals." He himself was setting us a very good example these days. It is fair to admit, however, he had always urged these niceties upon us since we were old enough to tie our own shoe strings.

After a few weeks of this Mother flared up. One evening she came in from the kitchen to find them looking at a new magazine together, as they sat by the fire. "Thank you, and excuse me," she said, "you two better be sure your hands and faces are clean, and comb your hair before you come to this meal. It's the last one I'm going to cook while you two play lady and gentleman. Miss Hulington, you may as well look for a new boarding place."

Father was greatly embarrassed. After all, he said he had only been trying to be reasonably polite. "Well, be a little polite to me and don't save it all for Miss Hulington," Mother said. So Miss Hulington found a new boarding place the next day.

This incident was quite a jar to our family life. Father remonstrated with Mother saying she had been much too harsh with Miss Hulington, who he felt sure, was just friendly, with no wrong motives. He thought she had very good intentions and it might be a wise thing for Inez to have a friend to balance her

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

weak spelling and arithmetic when she tried again for a teacher's license. Mother said Inez could be a milliner instead of a teacher and probably make more money out of it, and not have to be worried about her spelling. Anyway there was an old proverb about a wicked place that was paved with good intentions.

We children sensed that Father and Mother were still carrying on the fight, though they had transferred it mostly to their bedroom. We could tell by the way Father wouldn't talk at the table or tell us any stories; while Mother went about her household tasks singing about Greenland's Icy Mountains and India's Coral Strands. It was her favorite hymn when things were not going well. She found an added grievance in Father's growing indebtedness. She began to think they would never get it paid; so she had two topics to complain about.

Father had plenty of worries of his own. The interest on his debts kept piling up, rain or shine. That very winter a murrain struck his big flock of sheep, and they died by the score. No one seemed to know its cause or its cure. Apparently the cold winter storms which lasted several days or a week had much to do with it. When some of the flock failed to come into the barnyard for shelter and food, we often found their frozen bodies lying cold and stiff in some half sheltered spot in the icy pasture fields. As warmer spring days came on many of those remaining seemed weak and discouraged until hardly one in four survived.

Folks began to say that Squire Brown had taken a bigger bite than he could chew. He had replaced Max Kelch with a tenant who was steady and hardworking. He and Father were trying to make good some of the losses of the past year, but the new farm proved a poor investment. The profit in it did not pay the interest on the mortgage.

The thing that hit us hardest was the falling price of tobacco. Perhaps Father had been too optimistic in buying crops at high

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

prices. Certainly we were losing heavily on hogshead after hogshead that we had shipped to the market. The big dealers in Cincinnati and Louisville demanded the money they had advanced Father and this often forced him to sell on a falling market.

As one after another of these losses piled up word seemed to spread mysteriously to other and smaller creditors. One day Father drove to Tranquillity to bring home a new farm wagon, to replace the old one which was about to fall to pieces. He had borrowed a hundred dollars to pay for the new wagon.

"Here comes your Father home, children," Mother called to us. "I can see him nearly a mile away in that new red wagon."

"Let's run to meet him," Retta said to me, "and be the first to ride in the new wagon." Barefooted and bareheaded we ran through the hot sunshine the dusty quarter of a mile past the school house, and stood waiting and watching Father drive up the school house hill in his beautiful new wagon.

But someone else was watching, too. Out from the school ground shade stepped a deputy sheriff, with a paper of attachment for the new wagon. We had never heard of an attachment, but Father seemed to know what it meant. After a brief but useless colloquy with the officer, he unhitched the horses, climbed on one of them after lifting us children to the other, in spite of our loud protests. We wanted to ride in the new wagon! But it seemed that it must be left standing at the side of the road until the writ of attachment was satisfied. There it stood for the next few days, its flaming red proclaiming the hateful news of Father's failure, for all the neighbors to talk about. Finally it was hauled back to Tranquillity by the creditor, and we did the best we could with the old one.

No more humiliating experience had ever come to Father, but it was rapidly followed by others hardly less mortifying.

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Mother's brothers and Father's brothers came hurrying in to see if they could help, and particularly to see that such sums as were owing to them should be made secure. The summer days were long but not long enough for these conferences to accomplish much. There simply was not enough money to satisfy everyone. Mother insisted that the home farm had been bought chiefly with money her father had given her and it must be saved for us children. Father felt sure he could pay everything if he could just have a little more time; but no creditor was willing to wait; they all wanted to be paid now.

For a time Father desperately considered trying to conceal some assets from his creditors. It was possible to keep most of our live stock far down in the locust thicket, and to cover up some of our tobacco hogsheads with hay. Deputy sheriffs came searching for something of value to attach. We youngsters found it very exciting to see these officers of the law walk unbidden into our barn and look for concealed goods. We almost burst with delight when they climbed over the layers of hay but failed to uncover several hundred dollars worth of hidden tobacco.

But to Father these were days of unceasing mortification. When he found that delay did not help him he wanted to let the law take its course, each creditor receiving his just percentage, and saving to our family only the amount legally allowed as a homestead.

When he proposed this to Mother and his brothers there was loud outcry. "Now, John," said Mother, "you know my father gave me the Calvary place, and it was money from that farm that paid for this farm. You can't give this up and be fair to me." John's brothers, too, insisted they be given preference over strangers.

In the end a compromise was reached which satisfied no one. Mother held on to most of the home farm, but all the

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

rest of what Father had, went to pay his creditors. Some of them had secured themselves with mortgages, but others had not. Harsh words and bitter feeling broke down old friendships and family loyalties. As usual, those who suffered least made the loudest outcry.

One of these creditors was named Lignon. To him Father owed the balance due on the farm across the road, which had proved such a bad investment. Mr. Lignon had small reason to complain, since Father had made a large cash payment down, and the mortgage permitted Lignon to take the farm back. He should have been satisfied. But one day we saw Mr. Lignon driving into our barnyard. He was in a great lather because he had heard he might not get the full amount of his claim. We children had never seen this gray-haired, prosperous looking man before, but when Father mentioned his name, we gathered around to have a look at him.

Mr. Lignon was doing most of the talking in a loud and angry voice. "Now, Brown, I hear you've waded out over your head, and can't swim out this time. What are you going to do about the money you agreed to pay me for that farm? I hope you don't expect me to take it back off your hands and call the thing square, do you? That's a mighty poor way to do business."

Father said, "I don't see what else you can do, Mr. Lignon. My creditors are not waiting to see what I could do if they would give me a little time. So I guess you will have to foreclose and take back the farm. You'll have more than a thousand dollars clear profit anyway."

Lignon flew into a rage. "I don't want the farm. I want my money, and you can't cheat me out of it. If the law was like it used to be, I could send you to jail. I'll drag you into court and try it anyway. No man can play the scoundrel with me."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

He followed this up with a string of epithets and profanity.

Then something happened that we children greatly enjoyed. Father did not raise his voice but there was a ring to it we had never heard before. "A few more words out of you, Lignon, and I'll come there and pull you out of your buggy, and wash out your mouth with some of this barnyard dirt." And he stepped forward to make his threat good.

Very hastily Mr. Lignon got his horse turned around and started toward home, saying he did not want to get into any trouble and he guessed he had been a little too hasty. Father gave him a parting shot. "Maybe your turn will come, sometime. 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!'"

Father endured the recriminations of his creditors as best he could. To lose the respect of those he loved through failure in business was the hardest part. He hated to mingle with his neighbors or to go to church. What would his boys and girls think of him as they grew up? Even family necessities he was no longer able to afford.

Boys do not mind old clothes and going barefoot; but Inez and Nancy were young ladies, and Retta was growing up. She said to me: "When Father goes to the store in September to buy all of us new shoes to last all next year, I'm afraid he'll get mine too big. When I was thirteen in August he called me a young lady, and he'll think my shoes ought to be as big as Nancy's, but I've got little feet. Let's coax him to take us with him, so I can try my shoes on in the store."

I was willing; but our hopes were blasted and our faith in the world shaken when Father said, "Children, I owe so much at the store I can't ask for more credit. We'll just have to try to make the old shoes last us through another winter. Our farm stuff doesn't bring much when sold at forced sale."

Mother never let him forget that she had opposed these

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

adventures in speculation. It seemed she could not help saying, often and emphatically, "I told you so." Each time Father tried to take a step to meet a part of his obligations, it was a matter to be scolded about.

As a way out, Father suggested the plan of which he had thought favorably some years before. "Sallie, there is still plenty of good land in the West for homesteading. Let's take what the law allows us out of this mess, and go to Texas or some place where we can make a new start. I'm not quite fifty years old, and many a man has made a second start and made good later than that. It will be good for the children too, to grow up in a new country."

We children were prompt to second the motion; but Mother refused. "John, we don't know what new troubles we might run into. Some of us might die out there like my sister Addie did in Iowa. Oh, John, I'll never forget that. Let's not run away from this trouble and land in something worse." None of us could persuade her to take a different stand.

Some of the hot temper that had sprung up between Father and Mother in their quarrel over Miss Hulington, added its fuel to the present crisis. The curtain lectures which once were hidden from us children came more and more into the open.

After months of this domestic friction added to the outside humiliation which he had endured, Father exploded. Inez woke us younger children one morning before daylight and implored us to get up. She had been crying and could hardly tell us what was wrong.

"Father is going away. Mother scolded him so much he won't stand it any more. He's going away, going to leave us and make a new start, and I'm afraid he'll never come back."

If she had told us that Father had been struck by lightning we could not have felt worse. We went down stairs with an-

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

guished faces to the room where Father and Mother slept. It was true. Father was silently sorting the papers in his big desk while Mother begged him to stay with his family. His jaw was firmly set. It had not been a night of rest for him, and this step once decided upon would be as irrevocable as it had been slow to take its form. Some sense of how fixed this decision must be in the future life of this family, still his family, swept over him as he looked at our faces and saw the heartbreak in them.

He turned suddenly to Mother. "Sallie, I may have been a fool, but I don't want to be a coward also. If you'll try to forget my mistakes, I'll face the thing through. I'll go on, and do the best I can by you and the children, and we'll forget my plan to leave you."

We children, as well as Mother, sobbed with relief and all told him we would try to be good too. We crawled back into our beds still shivering with emotion. This family shipwreck was averted. God answers some prayers even before they are put into words.

CHAPTER IV

"God setteth the solitary in families." Father was reading the morning lesson from the Bible. Coming to this verse in the Psalms, he paused, struck by the thought it awakened, and looked round on his own family. "Did you ever think, children, that it is part of the Creator's plan to have human beings work together as families, not each one trying to get for himself all he wants?" Closing the Bible he repeated slowly the impressive words; "God setteth the solitary in families;" and added more to himself than to us, "I guess that's the reason it is neither wise nor easy to break families up. The family is part of God's plan."

Nancy said softly to Mother as we went out to breakfast, "Mother, do you 'spose Father is a little bit glad he did not break our family up?" And Mother fervently answered, "Yes, I hope that's true. But we must remember to act so that he will always be glad."

It was far from easy to remember these fine resolutions through the years ahead. The grind of poverty cuts deep into growing minds. And we were poor; not so much in food and life's necessities as in some of the things that make living interesting. Ready money was so hard to come by; and for years we knew that some of Father's unsatisfied creditors were watching for a chance to recoup their losses.

Inez, now twenty-one years old, and Nancy, sixteen, found the lack of spending money a great handicap in the matters of personal adornment, so important to girls. The quest went on and on. "Now, Nancy, we must have a new hat apiece before

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

that ice-cream festival comes off two weeks from next Saturday. I've trimmed our two over and over, and turned them around until I'm sick of the sight of them. Maybe you don't care, but I'm old enough to mind about such things."

"Why, Inez," stormed Nancy, "how can you say such things to me? Why shouldn't I want to look nice too? Only there are so many things I need, I don't know where to begin. I must have some white gloves as well as a hat, and my stockings are simply all gone to pieces. What can we do?"

"The only thing I can think of," said Inez, "is to try to pick and sell enough red raspberries to get some money. Not many people raise them, but it looks like we may have a fine crop, and they make awfully nice preserves and dessert. Let's pick a lot of them and try to sell them to our neighbors; let's ask a good price, because they are scarce."

The girls worked earnestly and their crate full of red fruit was so attractive that Cousin Nannie Morehouse, their first customer, decided she would like the whole lot. It came to a sum that delighted the girls as they planned the beautiful things they could add to their wardrobe. But when the berries were all measured up, Nannie said coolly, "Now, this can go on that debt your father owes us for the crop of tobacco he bought two years ago. We'll mark it down on the back of the note as a part payment."

The girls protested, but it did no good, "I'm glad you're only a third cousin by marriage," said Inez hotly. "I would hate to think that any of my real relatives could be that mean."

Such frustrations left their mark on our personalities. Coming in unannounced from the field one morning, Father found Inez and Retta fighting and quarreling as sisters ought never to quarrel. Holding court briefly, he concluded both girls were to blame, and pronounced sentence. "Each of you may choose

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

one of two punishments. Either refrain from eating any cake for six weeks, or remain away from all church services for the same length of time."

Both girls chose the first alternative. Revival services were about to begin, and they felt it would be most embarrassing to have explanations made why they were not attending. Besides the church furnished the only social contacts they could count on.

But in accepting the punishment, each girl planned to evade as much of its hardship as possible. Inez took her share of the cake from the batter, and ate it before the cake was baked. Retta cut herself a slice from every cake, hid it in her bureau drawer, and ate them when the six weeks were ended.

The rest of the family found this quite amusing, but Father was kept in the dark. Both daughters assured him at the end of the period they had eaten no cake, since he forbade them. They did not explain that Inez had enjoyed hers raw before it was cake, and Retta hers when it was very stale; anything to outwit Father!

Father could always find jobs for all of us. Once the two youngest boys were sent out to replant the young corn. They carried seed corn in their pockets, and when they found a hill missing, dropped in a few grains and covered them with their hoes. Lakin suggested to his older brother a nice scheme.

"While we are replanting the corn, let's chop out all the beans. Father always plants beans with the corn, but no one eats the beans but him and Mother. I'll have to stay home from school next September, and pick all these beans if we let them grow. Let's just chop them out."

Dan agreed to this plan as far as they could carry it out without being caught; and Father always wondered why the bean crop was so light that year. A man seldom knows when

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

he is getting some very important part of his informal education, if his children are his teachers.



Father talked of quitting the church. "I've always carried my full load, and a good many times more than my share. I'm still one of the church trustees, and the other day we were talking about a bill for a hundred dollars that had come up for some repairs. Sam Blodgett, who could have paid the whole bill himself and never felt it, said, 'Let's just divide it among us eight trustees. It will only mean twelve-fifty apiece.' One or two of the others nodded, but I had to vote no. I have not had twelve-fifty in cash for a long time, and I don't see much hope of getting that much soon. So I think I will resign and stay away from church."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Mother was deeply grieved at this thought. "Oh, no, John, please do not think of that. It would be such a dreadful thing for the children. Please keep up your church work, whatever else goes. Folks will just have to know we can not give as much as we could once; but if they are real Christians they won't look down on us for that. To leave the church now would make people think we are ashamed of what has happened. I'm not ashamed, and I hope none of us will be."

Father knew in his heart that Mother was right and went on with his church duties. Some of the neighbors had been secretly pleased to see our misfortune; but there were plenty of others who appreciated the way we swallowed our medicine. Father was surprised and very much pleased, when, not long afterward, his neighbors chose him for Justice of the Peace. Now he really had a right to be called Squire. When his commission from the Governor of Ohio arrived, with its beautiful seal, it was inspected and treasured by the whole family.

What a thrill it gave us to have a young couple come in one day to be married by the new Squire! Our parlor was opened for the ceremony with its beautiful rose and gold carpet, a relic of better days but still unfaded. Bright October sunshine gleamed across the cane-seated chairs of black walnut and across the cottage organ. In one corner, stood the cherry drop-leaf table with its secret drawer, which so intrigued us children. This was a real antique, which Mother had received as a wedding present from our Great-grandmother Bretney.

At the end of the room opposite the organ, a cheerful fire blazed on the hearth of the Franklin stove, above which the mantel was supported by pilasters cunningly carved. The mantel and the paneled woodwork of the cupboards which flanked each side of it, were all enameled white.

Mother was very proud of this room, easily the most beau-

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

tiful in our neighborhood. She was glad to act as a witness to the wedding ceremony. The new Squire was more excited than the bridegroom and prouder than the bride herself. But he got through the formalities with dignity, and really meant it when he made the young couple a wedding present of his first fee for such a service and wished them much happiness.

The need of some cash in these hard times almost got us down. Mother's teeth had gotten so bad that artificial ones were imperative. The worry over all the discomfort involved in having the old ones drawn and in getting accustomed to the new ones, was overshadowed by the question of cost. The dentist demanded cash, not much according to more recent prices, but enough to dismay us. Mother said, "John, I'll just have to put up with the tooth ache a few years longer. It really is not possible to raise the cash to pay for my new teeth now. Taxes are due this month, and that will take every cent we can scrape."

But Father did not give up so quickly and came in the next day with the solution. "You know, Sallie, we have one steer I was hoping to butcher next fall for our winter beef. But what use is beef without teeth? I can sell the steer and pay your dentist bill."

Mother was horrified. "I'd feel dreadful with that steer in my mouth and the children and you doing without beef all winter. No, John, I can't do that." We assured her that we could substitute chicken and mutton for the beef, and being the majority the plan went through. Father sold the steer for enough to get her a really beautiful set of teeth.

Inez having given up the idea of teaching, finally made a venture at millinery work. Two maiden ladies who had a successful shop in the next county, offered her a chance to learn the trade. Her pay would be free board for the first six months. After that they promised to pay her wages depending on what

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

she could do. Under this arrangement, Inez stayed three months then arrived home unannounced. She had given up her job, because, as we afterwards learned, she was homesick. She brought home a beautiful velvet hat to Mother and none of us ever urged her to go back.

It was teaching that finally brought us some financial relief. Nancy and Retta were both old enough now to try for a teacher's license. We knew that Kentucky offered a better chance than Ohio, teachers and prospective teachers not being so numerous there, as salaries were lower. So Father took both girls in our spring wagon, which he facetiously called Jim Blaine, and crossed the Ohio. He was resolved to keep driving until each girl got a teaching job. The trip was entirely successful and both girls began their schools in the following September. They were near enough to get home every few weeks but the unity of our family life was broken.

It was broken still more definitely two years later, when Inez died of that dread scourge, tuberculosis. Years before, Father and Mother had lost two babies when they were but a few weeks old. Then Paulie died when he was two years old.

Father's resulting distrust of doctors and medicine caused us to rely, perhaps too much, on home remedies. This may have been carried too far in the case of Inez, who dragged through the winter with a very heavy cold. Colds were common with us every winter and we expected Inez would show improvement when spring came. But spring glided into summer, and now doctors were consulted in vain. Her illness had taken fast hold and could not be shaken off. Another winter the hopeless struggle went on. April came with soft rains and warm summer days, but Inez slipped out of our family circle. The children who made up the Sunday School class she once had taught, gathered armloads of the wild flowers that grew all over the

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

hillsides, to bank against her grave in the new Calvary church-yard, once a part of Mother's home place. Home life without Inez would never be quite so full of surprises.

It must have seemed to Mother in the next few years that life was full of saying goodby, always one of the hardest things she had to do. If her children were not hurrying away to teach, they were in high school or college, and only came back to the farm for short vacations. She and Father plodded on through the routine of making a living and keeping a home for us when we did come back. It was but a few years until Sue, the youngest girl, came home from her second term as a teacher in the Kentucky schools to tell them that a young farmer in that district was coaxing her to give up teaching and marry him.

It was a hilarious wedding dinner we gave her in our big brick kitchen. Retta and Nancy conspired with Aunt Sis and Aunt Mary to see that for once Mother did not jump up continually to wait on someone who, she might imagine, was feeling slighted.

"You know how she is, Aunt Sis," said Retta. "She never sits still through any meal but jumps up a half dozen times to do something which must be done that instant. Let's try to keep her from doing it this one time."

"Yes, I know how Sallie is," said Aunt Sis. "She's waited on you children so much she's forgotten how to sit still." She went on, "Maybe if I sit beside her I can hold her down whenever I see her starting to jump." They agreed to try it; but Mother almost got away from them once. Father had just handed a heaping plateful to Cousin Frank Richards who said laughingly, "My, my, such a plateful! I'll have to be careful not to spill this over on the cloth." Mother said quickly, "I'll get you an extra plate," and she started to jump up; but she found herself firmly restrained on both sides. She flushed a little

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

when she saw what was happening to her and joined in the laugh at her own expense.

With one boy teaching in the far West, Sue living across the Ohio River, the youngest boy in college, and the other children teaching, the farm was a very lonesome place. Coming home one October day to spend an unexpected holiday, Nancy found the house empty. Mother was out in the field with Father gathering the last of the tomatoes. When Nancy scolded about her doing this outdoor work, she said, "Well, I can't bear to stay in the empty house, so I spend all the time I can with John out in the field."

Spending a few days with Sue, who was not very happy in her new role of bride and daughter-in-law, Mother confided to this young wife some of her own early struggles with Father. "You know yourself, Sue, your Daddy is one of the stubbornest men, who ever drew breath. But none of you can understand how terribly set he was when I first took him in hand. There were days at a time when he would not speak because he was offended at something I had said or done. His glum silence got on my nerves until I thought I'd scream."

"That must have been hard," conceded Sue. "I never knew he could be that stern. You lost two babies in those early married years, too, didn't you?"

"Yes, and my mother died, and then my father took a silly notion to marry again. Soon he wanted to come live with me and John because his marriage kerflummoxed. I told him plenty and I learned to speak up to John too, though I can't say it does much good to talk back to any stubborn man."

Sue smiled ruefully. "I really think your way of singing a hymn gets under their skin more than scolding. But you always told us girls you had other beaux, what made you take Father?"

"He was so big and strong. I wanted my children to be like

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

him; and at heart, he was always kind and good. We agreed about religion and the most important things of life."

"Did you ever say these things to him?" Sue asked.

"No, not as often as I should," admitted Mother. "I was



BY REASON OF STRENGTH

both shy and proud. Pride often keeps husband and wife apart. But at least, John's mother never got between us. I had such a nice mother-in-law, I don't know how to advise about yours."

Mother had developed an asthma, due, the doctor said, to a heart condition, for which he could do little. Out of the family councils grew a plan of transplanting our home to the nearby city of Hamilton, which had now become the center of our teaching. Father was sure he could find something he would rather do than to continue farming singlehanded. Mother was glad to make the move, since it would once more bring some of the children into the home.

Worn almost to transparency by forty years of childbearing and home-making, this transplanting to a new home left her happy but breathless. There came a few days of sudden illness. The doctors called it pneumonia, but we knew she was just worn out. "Be a good boy, Danny," she whispered four days before Christmas in her new home, and went easily from us.

Nancy turned with despair in her face to Father and her brothers, crying, "Oh, boys, boys, Mother is gone! Now we will not have any home!" She burst into a flood of tears; but when her grief had somewhat subsided, she went bravely about the business of trying to piece together the fragments of our shattered family.

CHAPTER V

John Richards Brown, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada. The conductor on the north-bound Soo passenger train read this name and destination lettered plainly on the modest piece of baggage belonging to the big man who had occupied this seat since the train had pulled out of St. Paul. Not many passengers were in the day coach of this short line connecting the trans-continental lines of the United States with those that crossed the Dominion of Canada; and the friendly conductor had stopped several times to chat with his passenger. He was a husky individual with a big frame and muscles developed by long years of hard work. His long white beard gave him the look of a patriarch from Bible times.

Just now the only other piece of baggage, a big lunch basket, was open on the seat and from it Mr. Brown was finishing a hearty breakfast, while he stared thoughtfully at the label that indicated his destination. Now on the third day of his trip this destination was at hand. Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada; what a combination of names that made. He liked big words. The closest he had ever come to a moose was the snapshot of a cow moose and her calf, mailed to him from Yellowstone Park by his eldest son. The picture showed an ungainly bull calf following his more ungainly mother along the edge of the river, or was it a lake, where she was feeding. He remembered the heavy jaw of the animal which gave it a distinctive ugliness. Would he find this frontier town toward which he was rushing, marked by such ugliness? Had he not

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

read somewhere that this young city was set in the sharp bend of the river, a bend so abrupt and ugly that the Indians had called it the Moose Jaw?

His long trip from Cincinnati into Canada had afforded him many hours for reflection. Memory had raced back over the seven decades of his life. Two of them had been spent growing into manhood on the old hill farm belonging to his Pappy and Mammy and overlooking the beautiful Ohio River. It had been a carefree boyhood, with a good father and mother and his six brothers and sisters. He had learned industry and self-reliance and built up a big healthy body. Then for two more decades he had worked hard to establish his own home. He had married Sallie, a cheerful and faithful helpmeet; and they had seen seven of their children grow up. The last three decades of life had seemed a slowly losing battle. He had lost most of the property accumulated in earlier years. Sallie had died, worn out. His children were scattered, the oldest girl dead. The one thing left to him in abundance was strength; his step was vigorous, his muscles hard, no stoop in his shoulders. His seventy-two years of life sat lightly on him.

Sallie's death, coming just after they had moved from the home farm to the city of Hamilton, had left him at loose ends. For several years he had sold nursery stock for one of the big nursery firms on the southern shore of Lake Erie. He enjoyed talking to folks and he loved trees; but the thing in this work that gave him most pleasure was the travel into new territory. He had worked around Baltimore and Washington, D. C., and from these centers had taken short excursions to many points of interest. Then there had been plenty of fish to eat! It was the one food of which he never got quite enough.

Often he had come back to the home where Nancy tried to keep up the old family life. To him it seemed hardly more

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

like home than some of the boarding houses where he would stop for a few weeks on his trips as a salesman. He liked better the big farm house in Kentucky where his youngest daughter, Sue, was raising her family. This last autumn he had even tried his hand at his old job of teaching school in her district, thinking it might relieve his loneliness; but the job had wearied him. It did not have the tang it had in his early manhood.

Now he was about to embark on a new adventure, to homestead land under a new flag, to become a part of the current of migration which had swept westward across North America, much of it in his own lifetime. He was pitting his strength against almost unknown odds.

From the jumbled thoughts of this reverie, his mind turned to a more recent picture. He had spent last Christmas at the home of his daughter Sue. In this old Kentucky farmhouse his other children had gathered for a family reunion. Dan and Lakin had come on from their schoolrooms, one from Iowa and the other from Illinois. Retta and Nancy had come from their schoolteaching in Southern Ohio. With Sue's husband Zedekiah and their three children, they made quite a houseful.

His six year old granddaughter, Beth, had climbed on his knee. "Grandpa, if we go to Canada will there be a Christmas there?"

"Yes, child, Christmas comes to every land, to every country of the world." Beth had considered this answer for a few minutes. Her eyes were as blue as her grandfather's, but her soft yellow hair contrasted sharply with his white hair and long gray beard. Her funny little nose did not look at all like his big, straight one. "Well, in Canada will there be a Fourth of July, too?"

How could he answer her? He knew so little of this land to which they had been talking of going. He knew something

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

of the history of his own United States. Born in the year that old Andy Jackson had stepped from the Presidency, he had lived through three-fourths of a century of history more thrilling than the world had ever known. The majestic figures of the great Civil War had moved in flesh and blood before his eyes. Was his family not just now thinking of taking part in that vast westward march, which for three centuries had rolled across America?

When he had been a boy, country schools did not teach U. S. History. It had been introduced as a new subject when he was a mature man, himself a teacher in winter, a farmer in summer. Certainly there had been little in his textbook about the history of Canada; a few paragraphs telling about the old struggle between French and English for this great Dominion; later, another page or two to tell of our attempt to invade Canada during the War of 1812. He felt sure there would be no Fourth of July in Canada; but perhaps there would be some holiday to celebrate their national birth and to glorify their national pride. So he tried to satisfy Beth that there would be some day of boasting and noise, some day of firecrackers and rockets, even in Canada.

Beth's mother, Sue, had been thoughtfully listening to this conversation. Now she put in a word: "Father, have you really decided to go with the rest of the family to Canada?"

"I hardly know, Sue," was the slow rejoinder. "What would you advise? Does it really seem a very sensible move for me to make?"

Sue wished with all her heart to urge this move upon him, but she was as cautious as he. "Now, Father, I certainly do not intend to advise you one way or another. But you know that if the rest of us all go, you will be left here alone. On the other hand, if you do go with us, you will not only be with the rest

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

of the family, but you will also have the chance to get you a fine homestead. But don't you let me influence you; decide as you please." Sue having gone as far as seemed wise, now assumed a fine air of neutrality.

Her father said slowly: "Sue, I'll be seventy-two years old this coming May. That seems pretty old to start out to homestead in a new land. But I've made up my mind to one thing — no more teaching school for me. This winter has been enough. I thought I might like to take it up again, but it does not come easy after being out of the schoolroom more than thirty years. When I finish this term in February I'm done teaching."

Sue was pleased that Father was, at least, giving the Canadian adventure favorable consideration. She tried adroitly to bring him to her view point. However she knew that a flank attack was far more effective with any male than a straight frontal offensive! Perhaps that was the reason she was his favorite daughter. Retta and Nancy often rubbed him the wrong way, but Sue never did. So now she only said mildly, "But, Father, I thought you greatly enjoyed teaching in your young manhood. We children all loved to hear you tell about your work in the schoolroom."

"School teaching was different in those days," was Father's answer, "there was some excitement in it, with boys and girls as big as I was for my pupils. Then it felt like I was going into battle when I unlocked my schoolroom door in the morning. When I went back to it this winter I found it the hardest, most tedious job of my life. My feet and hands are too big to use the remaining days of my life teaching babies their a, b, abs. No more school teaching for your Uncle Siff!"

"Who is this Uncle Siff Grandpa talks about? I did not know we had an Uncle Siff," Junior asked his mother.

Sue laughed. "Oh, that's Grandpa's name for himself. He's

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

fond of inventing strange words. I remember he used to call himself Uncle Siff when I was a little girl."

Junior was satisfied with this explanation. Father was still relieving his mind of the weariness of a big man trying to teach little children.

"It cramps me to try to sit in the school desks of today. Now, when I began to teach we had long benches, mostly without backs, to sit on and to use for a table when we had to write. Nowadays nobody expects their kids to do anything wrong, and if you try to stir some of the laziness out of them with a stick, the whole neighborhood gets excited. 'Order is heaven's first law' was our motto in the old times. I could walk around with a hickory gad and keep order, and those who wanted to learn could get a chance to study. Believe me, some of the big boys and girls who came to school in those days needed switching. After one child got what he needed, the whole school would settle down to business."

"Oh, Grandpa, did you really switch a big girl? Did she cry loud? Tell me all about it," coaxed Beth.

"She cried a plenty before it was finished; but I did not switch her, just threatened to. It was the first day of the first school I ever taught. I was only eighteen, but I was big and strong. But I must not get started on these tales of the long ago. We'll save this story for some other Christmas. You go play with your dolls while I talk to your mother some more about this business of going to Canada."

"I don't believe any of us ever get tired hearing about those old times, Father," said Sue. "I remember it seemed like the most fun I ever had when I sat on your lap as Beth does now and listened to the stories you used to tell us. I was too young to know anything about your teaching, though you taught eleven terms, didn't you? All of it I guess before I was born."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Father said, "Yes, I taught a few terms after I was married to your mother. The terms were short and I had plenty of time left in the summer for farming. Your mother liked to have me teach, it was a safe job; but I was looking for something bigger. I liked to try out my strength against hard jobs. Now I suppose I'd better look for something easy. Already I'm past the three score years and ten the Bible gives us."

"Why, Father," said Sue earnestly, "you are stronger and more vigorous than most men are at fifty, even if you are seventy-two years old. Losing some of your hair and having the rest turn gray does not mean you're old."

"Well, my mind is made up. I'll go with you to Canada." Father thought he had come to that conclusion by himself; but he knew that it pleased Sue greatly, too. There had been much more of planning and discussion. That had been four months ago, and now he was really in Canada. This long trip by train had afforded plenty of time for reverie and he was glad when the conductor stopped a minute to chat with him.

"Suppose you're a little tired of this long ride from Cincinnati, Dad. Moose Jaw is only a few hours from here."

"I'm tired of cold chicken," said Father glancing at the lunch basket, now almost empty, which Sue had filled so generously when he left the Kentucky Farm house to begin this trip. He added: "This prairie country doesn't look much like the Ohio and Kentucky hills. Guess I'll get used to it, though. When we crossed the Line early this morning, I expected to feel different, for I have never been out of the United States before. I reckon them revenue fellers that woke me up about daylight were Englishmen; but they seemed just as good Americans as we are. They didn't bother to go through my baggage, but just asked if the cold chicken tasted good. I'd offered them a piece but it is beginning to look kind of mussed, after three

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

days me eating out of the basket. I hope the boys are waiting for me at Moose Jaw, and if there is anything left, they'll finish it."

Then he went on, eager to talk a little after the long period of introspection. "Yes, my son and son-in-law went ahead the first of March and I guess they have had time enough to pick out a nice homestead for each of us. They will be waiting for me at Moose Jaw. Can you tell me, Conductor, is the land in that region all level like most of this we've been going through since daybreak?"

"Well, Dad," was the answer, "you'll find that Moose Jaw has a good sized river of its own which has cut into the prairie quite a bit. Then there is a line of Sand Hills quite a ways south of the town. Land there is no good; keep away from it. But you will find most of the Province level or rolling prairie and very good land as far west as Swift Current and even beyond that. Good luck to you, Dad." The friendly conductor hurried away, and Father turned his attention to the window.

The landscape was dreary enough; no little cross-road towns; no big barns and comfortable farm houses; no trees. He decided that it was the lack of trees he minded even more than the almost complete want of human activity. How still, how lonely was this endless prairie with bare spots showing through last winter's snow.

He turned his attention to the warm interior of the car, and was struck by something familiar in the look of a fellow-passenger who was walking slowly down the aisle ahead of him. No doubt this young man had come from another car and was enjoying a stroll through the train. When he reached the front of the car, and started back Father had a square look at his face and was sure he recognized him.

"I think I know you, young man," he said. The passenger

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

paused in astonishment, took a long look at Father and exclaimed: "Sure you know me, if you are the same John R. Brown who used to be my teacher at old Turkey Foot School . . . I'm the same Timmy Fallon who used to come to school to you there, though I hope I have a little more sense than I had then." There was a friendly grin on Timmy's face, as he shook the hand of his former teacher, whom he had often called Old John Brown behind his back.

"Sit down," said Father, making room for Timmy, "and tell me all about yourself. Didn't I hear that you had finished college and entered the ministry?"

"Yes," said Timmy. "I have been a Methodist minister for nearly ten years. I'm taking a little vacation to see another of your former pupils at Turkey Foot. Do you remember Eugene Buckthorn? We were classmates in college and he is now Dean of a Normal School in the State of Washington. He has invited me to spend a couple of months with him out there; so I'm on my way."

"Oh that's what became of Gene Buckthorn," said Father. "I had lost track of him. He ought to make a good school man, for I remember he was a good student. I wonder if his blind father is out there with him?"

"Yes, sir, I believe he is," said Timmy. "I suppose you're rather surprised to see me in the ministry? I was pretty harum-scarum when I was a boy; but I had some fine teachers in college who made me see the meaning of life; then I began to remember some of the things you said to us."

"Well, Timmy," said Father, "I learned long ago that many thoughtless boys turn out to be useful men. Your three brothers all settled down to be good neighbors and good citizens. Your sister Jennie was one of my model pupils, always trying to do what I asked and never in trouble with other children; but you

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

boys often tried my patience."

"That is true," said Timmy soberly. "Jennie often warned us that your patience was apt to end suddenly in a hickory stick. Do you remember one October day when almost the whole school came in about half an hour after the bell at noon, because sorghum making had started. We had all gone to Mitchler's mill to watch them grinding sorghum and boiling the green juice in broad evaporating pans until it thickened to molasses. It was the unwritten law that every child who could get a piece of shingle for a paddle was allowed to sample the hot molasses as often as we could lick our paddles clean."

"You were supposed," said Father, "always to wash your paddle clean in running water after each sampling; but I'm afraid appetite often ran ahead of sanitation with you boys."

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," quoted Timmy with his most solemn pulpit manner. Then he added with his friendly grin, "That's what we were *supposed* to do; but that first day of sorghum making, appetite ran past the noon hour with boys and girls both. When we all got back to school, breathless and nearly half an hour late, we very well knew that we had committed a capital offense. You said something then I never forgot."

"What did I say?" asked Father. "I had forgotten the entire incident."

"You said," replied Timmy, "This one time I'll overlook the breaking of a rule; but hereafter, licking molasses when you should be in school will surely lead to another kind of licking.' We little shavers never came in late again; but three of the biggest boys tried it a few days later and you kept your word. We asked them after it was over why they didn't 'jump you' as they had boasted they would; but they said, something about the look in your eyes, made them decide to take the

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

licking. They were almost as tall as you but I guess they had heard some of their fathers telling how you were one of the three men of the township who could shoulder that old brass cannon we used to celebrate the Fourth of July with every year; and they figured they'd best not tackle you. What are you doing nowadays? You look just as fit as you used to."

Mr. Brown said, "It is a long story. You've heard, no doubt, how I went broke after we moved from Calvary?"

"I guess I did," Timmy answered; "but our folks admired the way you paid out everything you could. They did not blame you for what you could not help."

"That's generous," Father replied; "but I never have ceased to blame myself for overestimating what I could do. That is my deepest reason now for heading into Canada. I'm hoping to homestead there and finally pay all of my unpaid debts. I would not try it alone at my age, but my two boys and my son-in-law are with me in this move to a new country. In fact, my older boy Dan started the idea last Christmas. I guess Dan was too young for you to remember him."

"No, he must have been a baby when you moved out of our neighborhood," rejoined Timmy. "I remember your two girls, Inez and Nancy. Yes, I remember Nancy very well. She and I used to have some jolly scraps. Is she married?"

"No," said Father, "she is teaching school; and she is still ready to give you an argument at the drop of a hat."

A sudden vivid picture had come into Timmy's mind — a picture of himself, a long-legged, freckled boy of fourteen, cavorting from one end of the playground to the other. A blue-eyed girl with bright yellow curls ran frantically after him as he dangled her pretty sun-bonnet just out of her reach, chanting, "Nancy Locket, lost her bonnet." He had jumped on the trunk of the old slippery elm tree, which a summer storm had

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

left leaning almost horizontal over the edge of the playground.

"What will you do for me," he teased with her bonnet almost touching her outstretched hands. "What will you do for me, Nancy, if I give you back your bonnet?"

"Please give me my bonnet," said Nancy with great dignity; "and I'll make you one for yourself." How surprised he had been the next morning when Nancy presented him with a beautiful doll bonnet of her own careful sewing. Looking at Nancy's upturned nose, he had promised her to keep the bonnet for his wife so she would not get her nose sunburned.

"Yes," he repeated, "I remember Nancy very well." Then he asked, "Is Dan your farmer boy?"

"Yes and no," said Father. "Dan and my youngest boy Lakin, have been teaching; but Dan would rather farm. I believe he is, by nature, what the Bible calls a husbandman. Nothing in the Bible story caught his fancy more than the tale of the rich fertility of the Garden of Eden. You remember that passage in Genesis: 'And the Lord God planted a garden Eastward in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.' This was the picture Dan seemed to have always in mind. He tried hard to get a foothold on the ginger points of our old farm in Ohio; but one terribly dry summer added to the rocky soil licked him. This last winter he has been teaching in Iowa where the soil is deep and rich and he came home at Christmas time with a fever in his blood that nothing but a farm of his own could cure."

"Some of us preachers, now-a-days, are fond of referring often to the subconscious. Guess they would say a deep, fertile soil speaks to his subconscious mind in a language he always understands." was Timmy's rejoinder.

Father continued. "Dan thinks Iowa corn is different from anything he has ever known before. It not only grows extra-

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

ordinarily tall, it seems to dominate the life of the farmer and his family. Seems there has been much talk there lately of the rich soil of this Saskatchewan country. Dan came home and swept us all along with his enthusiasm for what he thinks is the last chance on this continent for plenty of free land in a rich prairie soil."

"Perhaps it was not too hard to swing the rest of you into this adventure," hazarded Timmy. "Seems to me you used to talk pretty enthusiastically of going out West, yourself."

Father's reply was thoughtful. "No, I for one, like to see new country. Guess my son-in-law, Sue's husband, was the slowest one of us to show much enthusiasm. He had a pretty good farm that he had bought from his grandfather. Besides that, he has a contrary streak which always makes him want to pull in an opposite direction. Finally Dan talked him over and they have gone ahead and selected homesteads. I guess they are expecting me at Moose Jaw right now."

"I see we are almost due there now," said Timmy, glancing at his watch. "I wish we had found each other sooner. There are so many things I'd like to ask about. It has surely been good to see you again, and to see you looking so hearty and well."

"Yes, I would like to know more about you and your work," answered Father. "Here I've been talking about myself all the time; in fact, I have never told any one else about my hopes for the chief outcome of this Canadian experience. But I get very lonesome sometimes, and certainly enjoyed talking to you. Maybe we can get together again. The world isn't so big after all."

"I really hope so, Mr. Brown," said Timmy as he shook hands again heartily. "Guess I'll just about have time to catch my west bound train here. There's the conductor calling, 'All out for Moose Jaw!'"

Moose Jaw in April, 1909, at the beginning of its boom; a

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

few brick hotels and stores; many unpainted frame buildings lately erected; not many streets improved; piles of new lumber and building material of all sorts; men everywhere but not many women. The rough hotels and stopping places were full of men gathered from all sections of the globe. There was even a sprinkle, a very thin sprinkle, of the original inhabitants, the Red Indians. As Father stepped down from the car, he was glad to recognize in the crowd at the depot, two familiar faces, his son Dan and his son-in-law Zed Trelawney, Sue's husband.

"Hello, Dad, it's sure good to see you," the boys called as Father climbed down from the car. "How did you leave Sue and Beth and Junior? And the baby, that little tyke, can she sit up yet?"

Answering their questions hurriedly, Father stared about. He felt a sudden thrill of youthful energy. When he was a boy of seventeen, he had made a trip to New Orleans with his Pappy on a flat boat. They had loaded it with tobacco and other farm products, sold out down the river, and made the return trip to Cincinnati by steamboat. Such Western trading made a part of the pioneer life of those days. Moose Jaw was not much like New Orleans except as an outpost of pioneers.

Again, fifty years before, when Father was coming twenty, he heard the call of the West. Leaving his Ohio home, he had drifted by river boats to Missouri, where he had spent a few months as a farm hand. Home ties were strong with this young man; soon he had come back to Ohio, where he began the next year to farm for himself. All through this trip to Canada memories of these two Western journeys had come back vividly.

The day was cold and wintry, not much like April at home. Snow still lingered in sheltered spots. It was easy to realize that he was all of nine hundred miles north, as well as that

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

much west, of Cincinnati. Today he was a vital part of that great tide of humanity which in three centuries had swept from Plymouth Rock to the Klondike. No march of conquering tribes in all history had been like this westward sweep across America. These settlers seeking homes with such steadfastness of purpose, had no outstanding military leader. One common idea held them in unity; the individual, matching his wits against those of his fellows. However, attacked by common dangers, soon they found themselves matching wits and energy, not against their fellow men but with them. Freedom of the individual was thus yoked to a union of common interests; and the two were like a giant ox-team plowing through forest and prairie. This fancy tickled Father as he followed the boys to a rough unpainted two story building, labeled "The Imperial Hotel of Moose Jaw."

Dan said, "We're stopping here for the night, and will have our wagon loaded and ready to go out to our claims tomorrow. We figure there will be time enough yet this afternoon to complete the filing at the land office. Let us hope the crowd will have thinned out, and the line not be quite so long."

"So you have really located claims for all of us? Did you get me a good one?" said Dad.

"Oh, we have; that, is, we think we have, the pick of all the country," answered Dan, "and your three hundred and twenty acres is as pretty a piece of ground as you ever saw. When we located the claims, we couldn't see the ground, because the snow was so deep. My, my, was the wind cold that day! We'll tell you all about it when we get a little more time."

"But what about Lakin?" questioned Dad anxiously. "You know he's still down in Illinois, teaching school. Won't we have to wait for him? He said if it was necessary, he would cut his school short and come."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

"No, we won't need to wait for him." Dan spoke with assurance. "The homestead law has been changed in the last few days and we can file an application for him. We have his claim all picked out, too, cornering on yours. All he will have to do is ratify it when he comes. I sent him a telegram last night explaining the change, so he can finish his term of school. Guess he'll get here about the first of June, or soon thereafter." Dan's big, brown eyes glowed as he added fervently; "Four half sections of the prettiest farming land you ever saw, all cornered at the same point; twelve hundred and eighty acres of land, in a rectangle two miles long and a mile wide. Won't that make a plowing stretch!"

Father grinned appreciatively. He was thinking of the tobacco patches and rocky corn fields of the glacial hills of southern Ohio. Since he was twelve years old, or was it ten, he had been plowing; sometimes with a "jumping shovel"; among the stumps and roots of new ground; sometimes with a hill-side plow with a mold-board which must be turned at each end of the furrow, because the slope was too steep to permit plowing around a "land." Always there had been frequent turnings and twistings. He had counted himself fortunate when his farm was cleared enough of stumps and rocks that he could lay out a straight furrow for a few rods. How he loved to plow, and what pride he had taken in his furrows, straight in spite of stumps and roots! This prairie land might have rocks, but there would be no stumps and tree roots. His furrows could now run straight for furlongs, not rods.

"Done any breaking yet?" he inquired. "Gosh, no, Dad," said Zed, "the snow still covers most of the land, though it is going off fast. Besides we haven't had time. After we got located, we started to build my shack, and haven't really got it done yet. It is slow work when you have to start from the ground

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

up and besides, have to haul every stick and nail fifty miles. Then you know, there are only two of us on the job, and one of them fellers is not much of a carpenter. To tell the truth, he isn't much of a cook either, even if he does make a good schoolteacher." He laughed at his own wit and nudged his brother-in-law, Dan.

Dan took these backhanded compliments good-naturedly. He made small claim to being either a cook or a carpenter. But he felt his responsibility for the family decision in this new venture, and stood ready to carry his full share of the hardships and discomforts, even trying, if need be, to do his own cooking.

What Dan really liked was to mingle with the living things about him; growing crops; sweating horses; these crowding frontiersmen, gathered from all the ends of the earth. Chickens flying up to roost had always interested him. Many a time he had sneaked a few minutes from his chores to watch the hens with their ever-changing notions of where they wished to spend the night. It had tickled him to see a fat Dorking climbing and slipping on the way to some difficult perch, then hopping suddenly down to try a different one. These homesteaders on the streets of Moose Jaw were like the flocks he had so often watched, seeking a place to roost; except that in this flock the roosters were far more numerous than the hens!

CHAPTER VI

Gathered in the hotel room after an abundant supper, the younger men gave Father the story of how they had located their claims. On their arrival in Moose Jaw, they had earnestly tried to conceal how green they were at this business of pioneering.

Soon Dan said to Zed, "I'm beginning to see that we aren't the only greenhorns at this homesteading business. A few of these fellers from south of the 'Line' are old hands at this job of moving West; but many of the others are just as confused as we are. These chaps from the English lowlands are dead sure that nothing is going to be as good in Canada as it was in 'Deah old England, don't cher know'."

Zed agreed heartily. "I get goldarned mad trying to quiz a little helpful information from these Canadian officials in the land office. Just about as hard as it is to plow two more rows of corn with my old mule after the dinner bell rings. They sure can be obstinate and dumb."

Now they were both trying to make Father see the picture of the difficulties they had faced. "You know, Dad," Zed complained, "trying to talk to these durned Scotchmen bothers me more than it did to understand the German neighbors you used to have around you. They come at you with a 'Foosh, mon,' and I don't know whether to smile or answer with a cuss word from Kentucky." Zed's keen blue eyes and sandy hair indicated plenty of nerve and temper.

Father said dryly, "I guess you'll find it just as safe to smile

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

as to cuss any stranger you don't happen to understand the first time you talk with him. Your French-Cornish name of Trelawney hints to me of an ancestry that spoke a dialect hard for most of us to understand."

Dan added his comment: "I find the lowland English almost as hard to translate into Yankee as I do the Scotch dialect. They seem such a stubborn lot. No use arguing with them. They finish up right where they started and certainly do not have the Yankee sense of humor. There's a sign in the lobby that amuses me. It says 'Stranger, let us locate your homestead. We are Old-Timers'; but someone has crossed out the 'Old-Timers' and written 'Two-Timers.' I guess some stranger found out these old-timers were really hyphenated up-to-date crooks."

"I have heard," said Father, "that Barnum said there is a sucker born every minute. I suppose that such a gathering as this made up of fortune seekers is always pestered by pretenders who have an eye on the suckers. Did you two boys get taken in?"

"I don't think so," said Zed; "but we will know better whether we did or not when we see what kind of crops we can raise. I told Dan we must go slow or get skinned out of our eye teeth. So we took a couple of days just talking to everybody and learning all we could. 'Course you can't be sure when you size a man up, whether he is a crook or an honest man; but in this kind of a crowd it is safe to figger he's a crook until you see something to make you believe he is honest."

"Makes a fellow feel like Diogenes with his lantern," said Dan; "unfortunately we didn't have a lantern with us."

Dan's reference to ancient history left Zed cold; he probably thought Diogenes was a Kentucky colonel or racehorse instead of a Greek philosopher. "Made me feel like I was looking for a black cat on a very dark night without any lantern when the cat wasn't there," was Zed's way of putting it.

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Father said, "But you did finally pick a guide who seemed honest, didn't you? Tell me what he was like."

The guide's personality so vivid in their minds after that galling trip with him, was not easily portrayed. Like his name, Bill Thompson, he seemed almost colorless at first view. Said he had worked in that Province for the last seven years, most of the time as a cattle hand on the ranges. Since this land rush had begun, he had bought himself a team and been locating a number of settlers. Said he was willing for them to talk to some of these homesteaders, if they had time to hunt 'em up.

Thompson offered to furnish his team and wagon and drive with them until they were satisfied, until he located for them what they wanted; four half sections of good farm land lying in one acreage. He'd help them find the necessary marks made by the Government surveyors to enable them to file their claims properly in the Land Office. When they were satisfied, he'd bring them back to Moose Jaw, where they'd have to do their filing, all for a hundred dollars, cash in advance.

Cautiously they pressed for more details. Where did he think he could find such un-preempted land, with enough rainfall and good soil for wheat? Dan assured him they must have deep, fertile soil. How far was it, and how long would the trip take?

Bill Thompson led them to the map which hung in the hotel lobby and spoke with assurance. "Look, here on this map. About fifty miles south is this Lake Johnson, an alkali lake, like all of this country. Along the south shore of the lake, lies old man Walker's cattle ranch, the only ranch in all this damn region. Ye won't find many settlers' shacks in here yet, either. That's all good land, first class for wheat farmin'. I guarantee you can find what you are askin' for. It'll take three days anyway to make the round trip, maybe longer. Hope we

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

don't get caught in a blizzard."

"What would we do if a blizzard struck us? Would you know what to do?" asked Dan.

"A blizzard ain't no fun at any time," grinned Thompson. "We'd probably be able to make it to the ranch I told ye about, and we'd hole up there until it was over. No use buckin' a Saskatchewan blizzard."

So they dickered with Thompson to take them out on the Great Adventure. Privately they both felt shaky; but they did their best to bolster each other up. After all, they had to put their faith in some one. Bill Thompson was evidently no saint, but he seemed to know whereof he spoke.

"You see, Dad," said Zed, we had so little to go on, and we were risking so much; not just our money and a few days of our time, and the danger of plenty of frost bites. But all the family had trusted us to lead them into this new Land o' Canaan. Thompson sure didn't look like the picture of Moses I'd seen in Sue's big Bible. So Dan and me had quite a session off in a corner, trying to size up Bill Thompson and his offer."

"That's right," said Dan. "We really had very little to judge him by. I liked the straightforward way he had put his proposition up to us, and left out all the high pressure stuff; so we put our future and our hundred dollars into Bill Thompson's hands."

Bright sunshine had greeted them the next morning as they drove south from Moose Jaw; but the steady wind blew through their heavy winter clothing as though it were tissue paper. The boys envied Bill his big, sheepskin coat, which really shut out the cold. They were learning some things about this Canadian country. The cold seemed far more penetrating than any cold they had ever felt before. They were glad to cover ears and faces and leave the driving to Bill.

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

The wiry western team carried them along at a slow jogging trot, through thinning settlements. Shacks and farmhouses were strung farther and farther apart and most of them were single room shanties of new unpainted lumber. By mid-afternoon they had followed the last of the ruts politely called a road, and Bill was painfully keeping what he called the trail, by landmarks not clear to the unaccustomed eyes of these two pioneers. The sun was almost setting when he pointed out to them a distant ranch-house.

"Guess we can stay all night with old man Walker. He's used to stoppers coming in on him at all hours. Tomorrow we can locate them claims. There's a long strip of unpreempted land, southwest of here, that always looked good to me."

"A hot fire and supper would look awful good to me!" mumbled Dan through chattering teeth.

The hospitality of the rancher was not very enthusiastic, but even so it was a warming thing to these half-frozen travelers. It needed all the hospitality they could discover, plus a hot supper, and a long hour before a red-hot stove to restore them to something like cheerfulness. They slept soundly and with the rising sun were on their way again.

A few more hours of driving brought them into the middle of a vast stretch of gently rolling prairie. To Dan and Zed it seemed perfectly hopeless to look across the far-reaching snow fields and determine any exact location. Miles north, miles south, miles east and miles west there was only snow and not a landmark they could pick out. Even the mid-day sun, obscured by snow clouds, gave them no help. Only the steady blowing of a bitter wind from the northwest gave them any sense of direction. It had been blowing from that quarter since they had set out from Moose Jaw.

But Bill Thompson still spoke with assurance. "Well, we're

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

here with no blizzard to stop us so far. Here is where I told you, you would find plenty of good land."

"Gosh, it sure looks like there is plenty of land or mebbe rock, under all of this snow," grumbled Zed; "but how in heck are we goin' to find out what part of it we're to have for our claims? Down in Kentucky a man used to know the corner of his farm by a big tree or something he could see. Can't see nothin' here but long stretches of snow and ice."

Thompson said, "We'll just have to get out of the wagon and hunt for township corners. The Government land surveyors marked these township corners with piles of rock. Workin' out from a township corner, we can find a section corner, marked by a pit dug in the ground. We'll onhitch the team, and scout out from the wagon until we find a township corner."

"I guess that won't be too easy," said Dan. "I learned in Ray's old arithmetic that a township is six miles square. Now I'm going to learn it the hard way. I never knew it meant this much snow."

"That's right," said Thompson, "but start lookin'. We'll find one in an hour or two; just a pile of stones with a marker on top. Then we'll be O.K."

It was a painful search in the Arctic wind and snow. At last they found a township corner and some section corners, from which they established a rectangle, running two miles north and south by one mile east and west. In almost the middle of this land, lay a slough filled at this winter season with ice. Not a tree was in sight, though they had passed a few cottonwoods and willows fringing the shores of Lake Johnson that morning. It was impossible to judge much of the soil, but Bill assured them it was a good, rich loam and would produce a fine crop of wheat.

The south-west half-section of this strip was hilly and looked

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

as if it might be rocky. But another half-section extending east and west from their rectangle, lay level and convenient to the slough, around which, Bill said, they would find the better soil. So they decided on this half-section for Zed's land, thus changing their rectangle to a capital L. There was no ranch in sight, though far to the north they could make out the smoke from some settler's shack. Dan and Zed were so cold they felt as if they were Arctic explorers.

"Let's get back to Walker's and spend the night. We're satisfied, if you're sure these sections are not preempted," they told Bill.

Bill was sure. He had looked this all up before they left Moose Jaw, and had ridden through this country in the years before the land rush.

"If you fellers don't like this when you see it with the snow off, I'll agree to take you out again for nothing. That's how sure I am you've got a good piece of farm land here."

One more hard day's drive had brought them back to Moose Jaw, hungry but cheerful. They checked with the land-office, found no other claims registered against their land, and bade Bill a hearty goodbye.

"So, Father," Dan concluded, "we took the next day to finish filing on our claims, buying a team and wagon and loading it with lumber and supplies. Then we drove back to our claims; and on this raw prairie, fifty miles south of a railroad, we began the business of living. We spent a strenuous month, keeping warm, getting something to eat, building a shelter against the steady winds, watching the snow melt from our land. It doesn't sound strenuous just to name these things over; but man, oh man, were we glad to see April. And now it's sure good to see you.

"Our next step is to take you out with us to see your home-

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

stead for yourself; and to load on enough lumber so that you can start putting up your shack. Then we always have to think of food supplies, for going to the grocery is a long three days' trip for us."

Father was much interested in every step of the way, as they drove south toward their location. Travel on the trail was beginning to quicken with the coming of many more settlers to this new Province of Saskatchewan. New homes were rising along the first half of their way; but as they left the railroad behind, shacks became fewer and fewer.

To Father, as they drove along, life seemed richer, more hopeful. The bare land emerging from the snow was tingeing with green. Life was stirring! This breath of adventure, the charm of springtime, added to the challenge of pioneering, had awakened to new power a secret ambition which had gripped him ever since Dan had suggested this move to Canada. If only he could live long enough to pay off all his debts!

No one but himself knew how these unpaid debts had troubled him all these years. How mortified he had been when he found it necessary to call on his brothers for help! How he had feared that he might lose the respect of his neighbors and even of his children! How it had hurt him to have Sallie look upon him as a failure.

What was it his Bible said? "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore . . . ;" *BY REASON OF STRENGTH*. Maybe in this new land he could yet pay off his debts!

"What makes you so quiet, Dad?" asked Zed. "You ain't sorry you came with us, are you?"

"No, just the opposite," said Father. "Guess I've got into the habit of keeping quiet because I've been alone so much lately." Then he added, "I was thinking of something that hap-

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

pened to me a few years ago. It gave me quite a jolt; but I never mentioned it at the time to anyone but Sallie.

"This happened to me after I had been so discouraged by my financial smash-up. It really was a terrible blow to my pride not to be able to keep my promises, I seemed to lose all the joy of living through the hard years that followed.

"The last year I stayed on the farm, the children were all away and I was alone in the barn, re-hanging tobacco. It was a dark February day, and I was working in the very tiptop of my high barn — not an easy job, standing upon a rail, swinging up sticks of tobacco, and looking down into the empty space below. I must have stepped on a crooked rail, for suddenly my foot slipped. I made a grab for something to catch hold of, and the tobacco stick in my hand snapped in two like a match stick. I started plunging downward, feet first.

"It flashed through my mind that it was a long thirty feet from the top of that barn with nothing to break my fall till I hit the hard floor at the bottom. Just as I dropped past the rail I had been standing on, I flung out my left arm and managed to catch hold of that rail. I thought the sudden jerk would tear my arm loose, but I held on and swung my two hundred pounds back to safety."

"Not many men could have done that," Zed said. He added thoughtfully, "No, and very few of them could have kept still about it all these years since it happened."

"It did something to me," answered Father, "it seemed to restore the self-confidence I had lost in my financial failure. Not that moral strength depends on physical strength; but some way, it renewed my spirit to know that in spite of my three score years and ten, I still had plenty of bodily power. I'm glad we came to Canada." Father fell silent, dreaming how the Future might still redeem the haunting Past.

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

"Tell us some more of your experiences," said Dan. "We can't move the horses faster than a walk with this heavy load. I like to hear them, and Zed here, needs to catch up on a lot of things, since he has been a part of our family only the last few years."

"This trip makes me think of the first time I went West," said Father. "I was only nineteen, but Pappy had given me my freedom, as they called it in those days. I was strong and full of energy. Many a day I swung a cradle all day in the harvest field, and then swung a pretty girl all night in a dance. Seemed like I never got tired. I was pretty reckless too. I could chew tobacco with the best of them, and even boasted of the whiskey I could carry and still walk straight. My Pappy always had a jug of it in the harvest field, and I liked the taste of whiskey the same as a cat likes milk."

"Good thing it wasn't the White Mule stuff of these days that they make back in the Kentucky mountains," said Zed. "My brother, Ed, about killed himself drinking it."

Father went on with his story. "So when Pappy turned me loose to be my own man, I got on a steamboat and drifted down the Ohio. On the boat I met a farmer from Missouri who offered me a job as a farm hand. I took up with his offer and spent three or four months in that State. It was a slave state then and the man I worked for, wanted to make me an overseer; but I did not like the idea and I came back to Ohio."

"So, you chewed tobacco in your early days. Sue never mentioned that to me," said Zed, thinking of the promise he had made to Sue when they were married; a promise he had not kept very well, to leave tobacco alone.

"Yes, I began to chew when I was seventeen," said Father. "I had a fine set of teeth and liked to show them off. I remember when I was still younger, I used to bite off a piece of window

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

glass to show the other boys how strong my teeth were. I could out-run, out-jump and out-wrestle all the boys of our neighborhood; so when they dared me to chew tobacco, I soon could chew as well as anyone and spit just as far. The big iron stove in our school room was pretty well covered over every winter with tobacco juice. Some fellows couldn't hit the ash pan."

"When did you quit chewing?" asked Dan. "It must have been before I was born."

Father replied: "Yes, it was before that. I chewed for twenty years and then found I could not quit. In spite of all my strength Lady Nicotine had really made a slave of me. After we were married Sallie used to say to me: 'John, why don't you stop chewing tobacco? I can't get the stain out of your shirts, and it is such a filthy habit.' I'd promise her and try to quit, but soon she would be urging me to chew again. She said she was afraid I would go crazy without tobacco. By that time I couldn't sleep without a quid of tobacco in my mouth."

"Tobacco never got that strong a hold on me," said Zed. "Some men can quit when they please, they claim."

"Well, I talked to other men about their experiences," said Father. "Neighbor Jared Larue told me, 'Why, John, after I had smoked twenty-five years, I just decided one day it was a filthy, useless habit and threw away my cigar. I never felt hungry for the weed again.' But this didn't fit my case. One day I asked Uncle Amos Lane how he managed to quit. This was his answer. 'Well, son, in all the years I smoked I must have quit twenty times. But every time I threw away my pipe I looked to see where it fell. Soon I'd slip over and pick it up. Then one day I got mad and said, I'll fix you, and I dropped my pipe in the kitchen stove. There was a hot fire and I never had to quit again.' But even his suggestion didn't help me. I was beginning to have boys of my own and I hated to think they

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

would see me a slave to tobacco."

"I remember," said Dan, "when I was about nine years old, you promised me ten dollars if I wouldn't touch tobacco before I was twenty-one. I kept the bargain, but I forgot to collect the ten dollars which looked so big then. How did you finally quit?"

"Most folks would laugh at this," said Father; "but I kneeled down on the barn floor one day and prayed about it. Suddenly, I remembered that passage in Luke about preaching deliverance to the captive. It seemed to take hold on my mind and my hunger for tobacco left me, and never bothered me again."

Father brooded over these memories as he and the boys drove over the long miles of Saskatchewan prairie. At night-fall they found a settler's shack, at which, according to custom, as "stoppers" they were entitled to ask shelter for the night. The shack was already overcrowded with a Scotch family lately come to America. But the men were fed and provided with a place to sleep; and, most important, found a chance to thaw out before a hot stove. The horses seemed fully to appreciate their rest and feed, too. They were on their way early in the morning, and soon after the noon lunch, came in sight of Zed's newly built shack.

Far and wide stretched the rolling, sun-drenched prairie; stretching not for a mile or two, but as far as the eye could reach. There was hardly a landmark to catch and hold the focus of vision as it roved from near to far seeking a resting point. The rich green of springing grass was broken here and there with flashes of bright, colored flowers, all spelling a lesson plain to the most hurried passer-by; a lesson of the deep, underlying, fertility, waiting silently for the hand of man to turn it into the bread which should feed the world.

Across this vast sea, drifted at intervals cloud shadows, as some mass of feathery, white vapor slipped silently between

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

the earth and the bright sunshine, to heighten the illusion of ocean beneath them rather than land; so that one gratefully picked up the few landmarks that offered a sense of stability; a dip in the land where a slough showed water fringed with a deeper green, or the unpainted home of a lonely homesteader.

"Well, Dad, what do you think of that strip of land? Have you ever seen anything prettier than that? Your half-section lies just northwest of my furthest corner, where my new house stands."

"Now, Zed, do you call that a house?" said Father. "Looks like a woodshed to me. Old Uncle Billy Botts had a stable for his mare, Whistle Jenny, that looked just like that shack."

This was rubbing Zed on the raw, for he felt quite proud of his handiwork, so his retort was prompt. "You'll be lucky if you can build something for yourself as good as Whistle Jenny had, whoever she was."

"Whistle Jenny was a wonderful mare according to my Pappy. Uncle Billy Botts was an old bachelor who lived in our backyard when I was a boy. His sister kept house for him. Really she kept house for the cats. Nanny never had less than fifty cats, and often more; but Billy had his mare, Whistle Jenny. One night my Pappy came home late from singing school. He saw Whistle Jenny standing in the bright moonlight, in front of the stable door, which looked about like your shack. He whistled to her but she did not come to his whistle. She had always come before, but now—. He walked up close, reached out his hand to touch her and she wasn't there! The next morning they found Whistle Jenny cold and dead in the furthermost pasture. They never knew what killed her."

The boys laughed and Zed said, "Are you sure your Pappy didn't get Whistle Jenny mixed with some White Mule?"

CHAPTER VII

Zed's muttered language seemed like swearing as time after time the plow he was holding jumped out of the ground. "These damned hummocks throw you off your balance. Then when you get the plow point to take hold, the goshdurned sod is so tough, the team stops."

"You drive the team and let me hold the plow," said Dan. His lips tightened. He wasn't going to waste his breath swearing. But his heartfelt grunts as the plow jerked in his hands gave about the same effect. Little by little they turned a few furrows, but it was slow hard work for men and horses. Father watched them struggle and sweat.

"Let me show you fellows how to plow. Plowing is the easiest work on the farm if a man knows how. You don't lift your plow, the team does all the lifting and pulling. A simple turn of the wrist sends your plow in deeper when that is necessary. Turn it the other way, and out she comes. Let your team do the work and walk along and take it easy."

"All right, Dad," said the sweating boys, "you show us how to do this."

Father grabbed the plow handles, clucked to the team, then quickly shouted, "Whoa." It wasn't as easy as it looked. This prairie sod had been fixing its roots in the earth for centuries. It seemed almost like plowing through iron.

"What we really need for this job," Dan said, "is a heavy team of good young horses. I told Zed, when he picked this

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

team in Moose Jaw that they are too light for prairie plowing. Now if we could put this team on with another team like the one I plowed with in Ohio, back on that Shaker farm, then you'd see the plow move, I bet."

"Yes, and likely pull your plow beam out with the four horses. You sure would break plenty of plow points. Remember we are fifty long miles from a blacksmith shop," Zed grumbled.

"Well, the law requires us to break the land if we claim a homestead. Besides, we have to break it to get a crop in. So it's going to be broken."

Dan's jaw set firmly as his hands took a new grasp on the plow handles. Largely through his coaxing they had all come to Canada. He thought of the deep, fertile soil of Iowa, where he had been teaching last fall; of the rich, loose loam of that big community farm which belonged to the Ohio Shakers, where he had worked one summer. Those splendid fields that plowed so easily for the corn planting, had once been covered with tall prairie grass, or taller, tougher hardwood forests. They had been cleared into rich farmlands. What had been done could be done again. Where other pioneers had walked, he could follow.

So, sweating and toiling, they broke a few acres in time to get some spring wheat planted and oats enough to grow horse feed. Grain dropped into this fertile soil sprang to life and grew with magic speed. Slowly the shacks were finished. The prairie had turned into a blossoming meadow as May slipped toward June.

The date Lakin had given them for the end of his school had come, and Dan drove in to meet him at Moose Jaw. The grocery list was carefully made out, for always on these trips provisions must be replenished. Father was expecting a shipment of young fruit trees that were supposed to endure a Sas-

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

katchewan winter.

And the mail! There should be a month's accumulation of letters at the Moose Jaw Post Office, to say nothing of papers and magazines to aid in keeping in touch with the world outside. This family had been voracious readers all their lives; to live six weeks with practically none seemed like starvation, an emptiness as of physical hunger. True, they had Father's Bible, and Dan had his copy of Shakespeare. Zed said he needed some reading not quite so stale.

"Gosh, I have a six months old baby, two other children and a wife back in old Kaintuck, to say nothing of my mare, Dolly, and my mule, Jack. Surely I'll have some letters."

So Dan set out on his three days trip. On his arrival in Moose Jaw he met with a real surprise. Lakin arrived according to schedule, but with him came their sister, Retta, looking very jolly and capable, as she climbed down from the Pullman. She greeted Dan with a hearty hug and the impudent grin, characteristic of Retta

"Well, Dan, you glad to see me?" she asked as they claimed the baggage. "I guess I surprised you, anyway. I found out what day Lakin was arriving, joined him in Chicago, and we came on together. There are four of you boys here now, counting Father, and you certainly deserve one woman to cook for you and keep you clean."

"You'll think we do need a cook and a scrub-woman all right," grinned Dan rather ruefully. Dan liked to eat and Father's cooking had already grown rather monotonous. He thought of their rather sketchy housekeeping and wondered what Retta would make of such primitive living. The question staggered his fairly strong imagination, so he said, "Let's go to lunch, and I'll demonstrate how hungry a man can get who lives on Father's cooking."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

As they sat at lunch, Retta, always full of fun, regaled her brothers with the tale of the school term she had just completed. "I had a boy in the fourth grade this winter who was a very smart little chap, but who had a hard time because he stammered. The class had just finished that old fairytale, 'Why the Sea Is Salt', in which a magic mill grinds salt, salt, nothing but salt, until it fills the whole ship and finally makes it sink into the sea, where the mill still grinds out salt, salt, nothing but salt. It is forever carrying out the command of the wicked brother who stole the mill and perished with it, because he had forgotten the magic word which would make it stop grinding. Charlie raised an enquiring hand, and receiving my nod to speak, stammered earnestly: 'Wh-, why d-d-didn't the w-wicked brother j-just hold the mill over the s-s-side of the sh-ship, and let it grind all the s-salt into the sea?' I couldn't think of any good answer."

The boys laughed and renewed their attention to their lunch. "This roast beef is just about as tender and fine-flavored as any I ever ate. Is it a sample of the eating you have in Canada?" asked Lakin.

"Canadians claim their beef is one of their best products," answered Dan. "No doubt it is the equal of the best western beef of the United States, since they have plenty of prairie range to feed them on. Think we'd better take back quite a piece. This is our closest place for groceries. Did you realize that, Retta?"

"I know that pioneering offers plenty of hardships," replied Retta. "I'm prepared to put up with my share of them. What do we do next?"

"Perhaps you can take this list of groceries and get it filled, Retta, while Lakin and I see if we can finish the deal for two more horses I was looking at this forenoon. Then we will pick up the mail, load on some lumber and some coal, and be on

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

our way. You see it takes a good day and a half to drive out to our claims."

Lakin was younger than Dan by six years; but they had completed college together, having earned their expenses by stopping to teach when they ran out of money. They were pretty well matched, mentally and physically. Lakin was a natural born teacher as Dan was a farmer.

"What we need," said Dan, "is another team heavier than the one I am driving today. The team I looked at this morning should fill the bill. If you'll look them over and you like them as much as I do, guess we'd better buy them."

After a thorough inspection of the new team, Lakin concurred in this decision. The team consisted of well-matched, heavy bays, that looked able to break even tough prairie sod. Their price made a heavy drain on the boys' surplus cash, but they could not do without horses. Proudly the boys showed this new team to Retta and were pleased at her approval.

With the new team on the traces, and the old one led behind the wagon, the first afternoon found them well on their way. Retta and Lakin often exclaimed over this strange, new pioneer life and asked many questions. They both put up with what hardships the long trip entailed with cheerfulness. They all knew what a test of endurance it was to make a long ride in a "dead-axe" springless jolt wagon.

These wheat raising pioneers had learned to build on their wagons a tight box bed with high tail-gate and sideboards. The boys were perched high in the air on a comfortable spring seat; but it seemed to Retta her first hardship was climbing up to sit with them.

She looked with dismay at this precarious perch when Dan climbed to the driver's seat and bade her come along. "Why, Dan, you surely don't expect me to climb up to that high seat.

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

My goodness, it's twice as high as I am. I declare, it's as high as our woodshed roof and I haven't been on that since I was ten. You'll have to get a ladder."

"Step on the hub of the wheel, give me your hand, then step to the top of the wheel and you'll be up in a jiffy." Dan gave these instructions in a very matter-of-fact voice. He knew there were always loafers present, watching the performance and listening with interest to the woman's part in the dialogue which was generally executed with loud squeals and outraged squawks. Retta had never been known to be profane; but the tone of her voice, as she carried out the maneuver and landed beside her brothers on the high wagon seat, would have been ample stimulus to the balkiest Missouri mule.

Dan grinned at her. "You remind me of the Aunt Dinah I saw on the train the last time I came into Cincinnati for the Christmas holidays."

"What was wrong with her?" demanded Retta, still irritated by the remembrance of her breath-taking climb.

"Dinah and her son, who appeared to be about twelve years old, climbed aboard some twenty miles outside the city. When my attention was first drawn to them, Dinah was having an altercation with the conductor. The question was whether or not the boy could travel for half fare. The conductor was angry and positive. 'No, you can't put that over on me. That boy is too old to go half fare. Why, look at him; he's in long pants. Short pants, half fare; long pants, full fare. That's the rule, Aunt Dinah.'

"Heh, heh, hee-ee' she laughed high and shrill. 'Mistah Conductor, you kin jus' take my ticket fer de boy. If dat's de rule, I don' need no ticket. If dat's de rule, I gets to ride free, I don' need no ticket! Heh, heh, hee-ee.' "

Retta was not appeased by Dan's story. "I'm ready for all

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

necessary hardships, but why not have some steps on farm wagons like buggies have?"

"Men don't need 'em and women don't build wagons," scoffed Dan. He was in a good humor; his quick-stepping bays carried them steadily across the prairie. "This road has been traveled pretty much lately, I would judge," said Lakin. Is it the main road south, and does it continue as good as this all the way?"

Dan answered; "It is the main road south and has carried a lot of newcomers to their homes in the last few months. It branches off to the southeast and to the west. The last ten or fifteen miles it is little more than a trail, not easy to follow in the dark, as we may find out."

"There are a lot of folks coming in," continued Dan. "I wrote you about the rush of settlers to this new country, and I see no sign of its letting up. In fact, I would say it is getting heavier week by week. See all those new shacks? Every one represents a family of homesteaders. Of course, they are thicker around Moose Jaw. That town is really booming."

"It looked to me like a lively town," said Lakin. "Did you consider going into business there when you arrived, instead of going on with ranching business? From the looks of the crowds on the streets it might be a better place to make money than any farm."

"Yes, it might in these boom times," said Dan. "But in the long run give me a farm. I think you'll say so too when you see the land we have picked out."

Retta said, "Father used to say that nine out of every ten men who go into the mercantile business sooner or later go bankrupt. I agree with Dan. When you have a farm you have something substantial. Of course, school teaching does not make you rich, either; but I enjoy teaching and get lots of fun

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

out of it. You like it too, don't you, Lakin? Do you sort of hate to give it up for this farm life?"

"I'm not sure I'm giving it up," replied Lakin. "I may go back to it as soon as I complete my homestead, unless we really make more out of this farming business than I expect. It certainly is a shame that a man who likes teaching has to leave it to make a decent living. When I began to teach at eighteen, my fifty dollars a month looked pretty good to me. That was six years ago, and while I'm doing better, the long vacations, and demands for more schooling eat up all one makes."

Retta said, "You had quite a tough time that first school you taught, didn't you?"

"Yes, that was a community in which there was a pretty heavy percentage of negroes and there was friction between the two races. As soon as the colored folks found out that I would give them a square deal, I got along O.K."

"That's a real compliment," said Dan, "when both sides in a quarrel consider you fair. Compliments in the teaching business are apt to be as scarce as hen's teeth. I remember one I got, that was meant well but sounded like a slap in the face. I was trying to talk my board of education into buying some school equipment we needed. They listened and voted to do as I said. Then the most ignorant of them addressed the others: 'Gentlemen, we've got a good teacher. If we do as he says, and get a few more improvements, we'll have a school here equal to none.' The others solemnly agreed and I took it for a compliment, supposing he meant to say equal to any."

"Let me tell you about one of the compliments that was handed to me a few years ago," said Lakin. "I was teaching in a small coal mining city in Illinois. One of the mine foremen was my fellow-boarder, a very rough and husky specimen. We talked to each other at the table and got to be real good friends.

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

He said to me one day, 'Chum, I've listenin' to you talk, and I've been chattin' with the boys and girls who go to school to you.' I saw there was more to follow and inquired what conclusion he had come to. He said, 'Well, chum, I never got no education, only went as far as the Third Reader; but you know, I sort of hanker to go to school again, if I could have you for my teacher.' He followed it up with a hearty slap on my back, and I felt like I had had a real compliment."

"That was a real compliment," agreed Retta. "Once you can get a person to really want to learn, your battle is won. You have the bitter with the sweet in pioneering, I guess, just as we do in teaching."

Sweetness there was in these long June days on the far-stretching prairie trail. It was rough but not dusty. Flowers and grasses spread a bright carpet, far as the eye could reach. At intervals, this multi-colored carpet was overlaid with brown rugs of freshly turned sod, wherever new settlers had pitched their tent-like shacks of unpainted pine.

Still, fifty miles of sweetness is quite long drawn out. So it seemed to the three people on the high seat of the jolting farm wagon. Retta was a good story teller and loved to talk and laugh, while Lakin was a natural chatterbox. Dan's conversational periods were more stately and sonorous, but they rolled out easily. Retta and her two brothers had plenty of common memories and interests to talk about, but this did not cushion their weary bones. At the end of the second day, when they came in sight of Father's and Zed's shacks, they were tired but in good spirits.

"I'm sure glad Sue seems to be getting along so well," Zed remarked, looking up from his long awaited letters. "Guess I'll be glad to get home in August in time to eat my share of the Elberta peaches. It'll be easy to rent or sell my good farm, but

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

a lot harder to drag out all the things I'd like to bring with me and ship them up here. Reckon I'll have a carload easy."

"It's a good thing you left Sue and the babies in Kentucky until we get things better settled here," said Father. "I guess this kind of life would seem pretty raw to them."

"We have innumerable tasks to clear up if we get rid of the rawness, and even if we manage to keep on living," said Dan. "We can't live without fuel and water; so about the first job is to dig a well. Of course, breaking enough land to comply with the homestead law must be done. I'm afraid it will soon be too dry for our four-horse team to make much headway."

"This being nine hundred miles further north really shows up in the long days and short nights," said Lakin. "The twilight being so long fools us too. Seems like I just hit the bunk when it's daylight again. The nights are so pleasant and cool, it's a pity they aren't longer."

They all worked early and late. Usually the breaking needed two men and four horses. "Some day we'll have to get a tractor on this job," said Zed after a long sweaty siege with the plowing. "But I reckon we'll have to wait until the railroad gets a little closer. It sure wouldn't pay to go into Moose Jaw every time we needed fuel or repairs for a tractor."

Dan gazed thoughtfully at the heaving flanks of his team, growing thin with the heavy plowing. "No, we'd be running for repairs pretty near all the time with any of this bunch operating a tractor. I wish I had spent some of my college days studying the gasoline engine, instead of so much time on Latin and Greek. Old Horace ought to have had an ode or two about farm tractors; then maybe we could have learned something useful."

The long summer without rain was a new experience. Water must be hauled from distant lake or slough until they had a well. Digging a well was an unsolved problem to these college

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

boys. Dan and Lakin worked together on it; one down in the hole, the other at the surface pulling out dirt. After his turn down in the well, Lakin climbed out looking worried.

"We're down nearly twenty-five feet, and no sign of water yet. I don't like to go down so deep without some curbing to hold the dirt from caving in. Down at the bottom of that well would be a mean place to get caught!"

"Oh, I'll take the next turn," said Dan. "I think it's safe enough for a while yet. We haven't anything that will do for curbing anyway." He climbed down for his turn. Laboriously he filled his bucket with earth, which had been packed there for centuries, and straightened up to give Lakin the signal for hoisting. Suddenly, without warning, a ton or two of loosened earth fell on him. Fortunately there were no rocks in this falling mass, and he managed to keep erect though almost suffocated.

Lakin, alarmed by the crash, called frantically, "Dan, Dan, can you hear me? Can you hold fast to the rope? Steady, boy, I'll haul you out!" With his energetic help, Dan soon managed to free himself and climb shakily out. Retta found them both shaky and pale when she came out to see how the work was progressing. She scolded them roundly.

"Boys big as you two, acting like First Reader babies! Taking all kinds of risks just because you are out here on the prairie where things are hard to get. That's the reason you should be extra careful. Suppose Dan had broken a leg. Where would you get a doctor?"

Dan could still grin. "Looks like I'll need a doctor now, if I am to be buried under all this scolding besides having so much dirt fall on me, a few minutes ago. Tomorrow we'll go down into the south country and cut some cottonwood poles for curbing as Lakin suggested a while ago. Some folks have to take a hard bump before they'll admit the truth."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

The problem of fuel was hard to solve, too. Buffalo chips, useful for cooking meals, were scarce. Some bituminous coal could be transported with the loads they hauled from Moose Jaw, if they were not too heavily loaded with lumber. But to provide fuel to keep them warm through the long Canadian winter, this really had them worried.

"Gosh, boys," Zed said, "I hate to think of Dad and you two greenhorns here alone next winter when the snow begins to fly. Looks like you are due for a heavy frostbite. Neighbors say you can expect freezing weather any time after the middle of August. I don't see much around here to burn."

Lakin remarked cheerfully, "Oh, guess we'll keep warm." Dan, recalling the terrific cold of the day in March when they had located their claims, looked troubled. "It will be a long winter," he conceded, "and these shacks are not built to shut out zero weather."

Zed offered a little comfort. "I heard old man Walker say the old-timers used to cut some peat out of the banks around the Lake. Maybe you could stock up on peat enough to keep you warm with what coal you can haul. It costs nothing but the work of getting it out."

Following this idea Lakin and Dan made the attempt. They found holes around the shores of the Lake where peat had been mined. The best turf lay under water in these old holes which had been dug out by other pioneers.

"Think you can stand it, to wade into this cold water," queried Dan, "and work there for an hour or two digging peat? It feels pretty icy to me."

"What can't be cured must be endured," quoted Lakin. "If we had some rubber boots, it wouldn't be so bad. Guess we'd better freeze now than next winter, though, so, here goes."

Wading hip deep in the icy water, the boys worked as long

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

at a time as they could endure it. Fortunately the mid-day sun was warm and the steady Canadian breeze soon dried the soaked clothes and restored their circulation. This peat burned well when dried out but did not hold fire like the bituminous coal. Several big wagon loads made them feel a little easier as they thought of the long months of winter.

Another long trip into the South country yielded a load of cottonwood poles and willows which formed the framework of a stable thatched with straw.

"My penmanship teacher used to say," reflected Lakin, "to become a good writer one needed the three G's; grit, grip and gumption. Seems like a Saskatchewan pioneer needs all three of them, too."

"Looks like you feel pretty fit," said Retta. "This wind and sun has given us all a wonderful tan. It makes me feel a little better about leaving you here when I go back to Ohio. Father looks strong as an oak, in spite of being nearly seventy-three, you boys match him and all of you eat like harvest hands."

"Watch me swing this heavy harness up to the peg above my head," said Lakin, suiting the action to the word. "It made me puff to do that when I arrived in June. Now it's easy."

Their wheat and oats stood high as a man's head. Dan said to Retta, "Take a snap shot of me standing in the edge of this wheat field. You'll need some kind of proof to show our Ohio friends what Saskatchewan is able to produce. I'm willing to bet our wheat will go fifty bushels to the acre, and some of our oats will make a hundred. Just wish we had more acreage."

"Well," Father said, "small acreage may be a blessing in disguise, until we get more equipment. Harvesting and thrashing with the tools my Pappy used is slow work. Maybe Zed can have his combined harvester and binder up here next summer. Looks like we'll really need it."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Retta said, "I'm coming back next summer, too, and I think Nancy will come along without much coaxing. This is more fun than any summer resort, if the mosquitoes do nearly eat you alive. Wish I could go on cooking for the outfit this winter instead of going back to the schoolroom. Teachers' salaries are pretty low; but I'll save some cash to bring along."

"We'll miss your cooking, Retta, and all the other hard tasks you've done for us this summer," Dan said. "Guess we'll have to elect Pappy chief cook, he makes the best bread. But three men alone through a long Canadian winter are certain to get pretty gloomy and dull. I'll mind that even more than the slim eating. Don't like talking to myself even if it insures an intelligent audience."

Retta laughed. "Oh, you'll always find someone glad to listen. Seems to me I heard you entertaining a group of our Scotch neighbors with some tale of Buckeye politics the other day. They were grinning and one really laughed aloud."

"Yes, I'm glib enough when there's any one human to talk to. Not quite like Lakin, here. He's so fond of talking I heard him last week carrying on a long conversation with Sam and Bob, our two bronchos. Didn't give them a chance to say anything but 'Neigh, Neigh'." Dan laughed heartily at his own nonsense.

"Well, the Bible says 'Let your communication be, Yea, yea, and nay, nay,' which I think, proves Sam and Bob better Christians than Dan," retorted Lakin, taking his turn at noisy laughter.

Retta was not fooled. She knew how these men-folk hated to see her go, but covered up their feelings with cheerful banter. They were following Father's old motto, 'Keep a stiff upper lip,' which had often greeted their boyhood hurts.

It was two weeks until the first of September when Zed and

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Retta started back to the United States. Father drove them into Moose Jaw, and came back the fourth day with his team plodding wearily and himself well fagged out. Behind the wagon trudged two huge oxen.

"Whoa Nig, whoa Roney," he shouted, as horses and oxen came to a stop. "Look what I've got, boys," he called, with triumph in his voice, not unmixed with doubt. "I got this yoke of oxen for one hundred and twenty-five dollars, and they'll pull as much as any four horses. Now, watch us get the plowing done."

"Did I hear you call them Nig and Roney?" asked Dan as he looked them over critically. "Those names seem to fit them. Nig is black and Roney is sort of ring streaked and striped as the Bible puts it."

"Do they know Gee and Haw?" asked Lakin. "That's about all I know about driving oxen. Do you suppose we can really plow with them?"

"Sure, the man I bought them from told me that they are well broken. I've never handled oxen, but I've seen it done. It's no harder than driving a team of horses," said Father, with all the assurance he could muster. He had purchased these big beasts on a sudden impulse as he started homeward from Moose Jaw. Their ponderous power had filled him with quick admiration; but he had debated the good sense of this investment most of the weary miles home.

The yoke of oxen, great long-horned beasts, weighing nearly three-quarters of a ton each, looked as weary as Father. They seemed quite contented to stand without hitching after the long trip from Moose Jaw.

The next morning the boys tried them out. They were strong! When they leaned into the yoke, the plow or something else had to come! If some part of the plow gave way under the

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

strain, repairs must be made by slow and painful means. Skillful ox drivers might have done better but neither Dan nor Lakin showed talent in that direction.

Harvest too, was on them with little equipment either for cutting the heavy grain, or for thrashing it. Primitive methods must suffice; sickles and cradles could be used for cutting, and horses or oxen for treading out what grain was most needed.

Patience grew thin. These big oxen were far slower than horses. You could not hurry them. Stolidly they moved, no matter how much needed to be done. But they did swing their heavy, long-horned heads at the irritating flies and mosquitoes with a suddenness that was surprising and positively dangerous.

"Some unlucky day," declared Dan, "one of those big, dumb oxen is likely to ruin me for life. I'm always expecting a deadly jab from one of those sharp-pointed horns. Why, in tunket can't they pick up their feet as fast as they can swing their clumsy heads?"

Big Nig and Roney seemed gentle; but as frosty mornings came on it was not easy to slip the yoke over their huge necks. Often a sudden lunge had to be met with a firm hand. Father had turned them over to the boys, saying that in the spring they'd be very useful in the breaking.

When the ground began to freeze, there was nothing for them to do; so Nig and Roney stood through the long winter nights and short days in makeshift stalls. Once a day they must be led to water at the slough or well. This became a real adventure as the cold increased, for the jumpiness of the big beasts grew with the cold. They would roll their heads and with thunderous bellowing charge on the man leading them. Then they would stop suddenly with tail high in the air, only a few feet away. They were only playful, but it called for all one's nerve to meet these charging behemoths without turning to run.

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Lakin remarked, "No matter how fast they run at you, no matter how they shake their heads and roar and jump up and down, they always come to a dead stop if you look them straight in the eye." He added thoughtfully, "I can't help wondering what is going to happen some day if they don't stop."

One morning near the end of winter they found Roney with a broken neck. He had jumped too high and fallen in his stall. Sadly they skinned him and wondered what to do with Big Nig.

"The hide will bring us a little money but Roney's carcass we can't use, and Big Nig by himself isn't any good," said Lakin. "I'm going to take him into Moose Jaw and sell him. I'll get back most of the hundred and twenty-five that Father put into them, if not all of it."

It was a tiresome walk to Moose Jaw trudging behind the big black ox, at a pace that suited Nig. The winter was coming to an end, but Big Nig was still jumpy. Lakin led him into a livery stable. McCallum, the owner, looked at the man, leg-weary, hungry, unshaven, with hair uncut for two months; then at Nig, tail high in the air as he roared and jumped and snorted at these strange surroundings. "Want to sell him?" McCallum asked. "Yes, make me an offer," said Lakin promptly. "Give you a cool hundred for him," offered McCallum. "No, not enough," was the equally positive answer.

McCallum studied the pair; the weary but resolute man; the dynamic ox, filled with vigorite or some other explosive. "It's a big price, mon, but happens I have a white ox that'll go fine with that fellow. I'll make it one hundred five." "Not enough yet," said Lakin. "I'll put him up here and go get a hair cut."

After a visit to a barber, a hot supper, a good sleep, and a stack of pancakes for breakfast, Lakin was in better mood for trading. McCallum was out, so Lakin started down the street, tackling each passerby who looked like a farmer or a stockman.

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

"Interested in buying a big ox?"

His question sometimes brought a curt reply or a curious stare; but persistence finally won. A friendly Yankee looked him over quizzically. "If your ox is as husky as you are, I'll look him over. Maybe he'll match a black one I own."

McCallum was not in yet. His boy said he was looking for the owner of the black ox. Guessing what this meant, the Yank examined Nig with interest. Homesteaders were arriving on every train and there was money to invest in anything resembling horse power. Big Nig left no doubt in the spectator's mind that he was a powerful animal.

"I figured that the twentieth man I tackled might be my lucky customer," grinned Lakin. "Sounds like you are fond of figuring things out," said his Yankee friend. "Did you really count every man you tackled?"

"Yes, when I study a problem, I like to estimate the answer first. Now my problem is to get back an investment of one hundred and twenty-five dollars. McCallum wants my ox, but he hopes to beat me out of a big slice. I'm ready to sell at my figure."

"It's a high figure for a single ox," said the other; "but Nig, if that is what you call him, is such a perfect match for my Blackie, I'd like to have him. Tell you what I'll do. I'll make it a hundred and fifteen. Is it a bargain?"

"Split the difference with me, and we'll call it a trade," agreed Lakin. "That's close enough to what I'd hoped to get." So the deal was completed, and Lakin bade goodbye to Big Nig with a light heart, and sought a hitch-hike back to the South country. That money would do much toward buying grub for the coming summer. Potatoes, cornmeal and vegetables must be substituted for beef-steak. The three men had lived through a hard winter. Sue and her children were coming; perhaps both Retta and Nancy would come with them. Homesteaders were

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

stringing over this rich prairie by the dozens. The wild geese
were flying north!

CHAPTER VIII

Retta and Zed coming home from the summer in Canada, found that Nancy had spent most of her vacation with Sue on the Kentucky farm. She helped Sue with the children and the farm while Zed was in Canada. Zed immediately set about completing the arrangements for the move to the new home. The three sisters spent a very lively two weeks, before the opening of school, in exchanging experiences and laying plans for the winter.

"How the children have grown this summer," chattered Retta. "Junior will be ready for grade Three, or Four, I've forgotten which?"

"He ought to be ready for the Fourth grade," scolded Sue; "but he's the kind of boy that's hard to control, and the teacher last winter was too easy on him. They are hiring her again, and with our five months' term, I'm afraid it will be another wasted winter for Junior."

Nancy agreed. "Yes, and Beth is old enough to begin school, but it will be a long walk for her. Why don't you just teach her yourself, Sue, and let her stay home this winter."

"I have a better scheme than that," said Sue; "but I don't know what you and Retta will say to it. My scheme is this. Let us come to Hamilton and spend the winter with you two girls. Zed will be leaving for Canada, as soon as we can get things cleaned up here. We can put both Beth and Junior in proper classes in Hamilton, and give them the benefit of one year in a first class school system at least." Sue spoke with a

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

good deal of feeling. The lack of good schools for her children had galled her even more than quarreling with her mother-in-law had when she had been first married.

"Oh, that will be a lovely scheme," Nancy said enthusiastically. "I have always been honing for a family of my own; now I'll have one ready made, and an awfully nice one." She caught little Mary up from the floor and danced across the kitchen with her.

Retta liked the idea too. "We three girls will have a lot of fun together all winter. I believe it will be as good for us as it will be for the children. How many times I wished this summer that you could see Canada with me."

"Nancy spent most of the summer with me and the children," said Sue; "but I've a notion something happened just before she came that makes her a little absent minded these days."

"Go on, go on," cried Retta; "don't just awaken my curiosity, go on and satisfy it. You know curiosity killed one cat, and I don't know just what effect too much of it might have on me."

"Oh, don't listen to Sue's nonsense," retorted Nancy, her face a little pinker than usual. "She is always building some sort of an air castle without any foundation. Come on, Beth, let's you and I and Mary go out and look at the garden."

"She won't face it, so there must be a little truth in it. Let's hear the whole story," Retta said.

"Well, I guess I ought not to make too much of it," admitted Sue; "but you can judge for yourself. Do you remember that Father wrote us soon after he reached Moose Jaw that he met Timmy Fallon on the train and had a nice long chat with him? I don't remember Timmy very well, but you must have gone to school with him."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

"Yes, I remember Timmy and Father telling about meeting him," Retta answered. "Father said something about it after Lakin and I got there. What's the connection with Nancy?"

"Timmy came to Hamilton to see Nancy soon after her school was out and you had gone to Canada. He said he had met Father on the train and had found it very pleasant to renew old acquaintance. He has a good church somewhere up in Ohio, and was just back from a vacation trip to the State of Washington. I believe he was on his way there when Father met him."

Retta said, "Yes, Father told us he was visiting Gene Buckthorn who used to go to school with us at Turkeyfoot. You were too young, I suppose, to recall either one of them; but I know how they and the other big boys used to tease Nancy and threaten to cut off her curls."

"She is quite easily teased yet," answered Sue. "I couldn't get much out of her, but I think Timmy is planning to come see her again when she gets back to Hamilton. I believe she had a letter or two from him this summer. Better not mention any of this to my Zed, or he'll make Nancy's life miserable."

Retta was stirred to reminiscence. "Nancy always was attracting some boy, and Father always shooing them away from her. George Crumley, who worked for us when you were a baby, wanted to write to Nancy when he left; but Father put his foot down on that. Later one of the Kelch boys was constantly trying to do the milking or something to save Nancy from some hard chore, until Father read the riot act to him. I guess since Timmy is a Methodist preacher, Father will have to keep quiet this time. So Timmy isn't married? He must be fortyish."

"Get Nancy to tell you why he isn't married," answered Sue. Here she comes now." Sue turned to Nancy whose color was still a little too bright, perhaps from romping with the

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

children in the garden. "I was just telling Retta about Timmy Fallon's visit, and she was wondering why he isn't married yet."

"I remember he was quite good-looking and had a very nice voice," Retta said. "What sort of an alibi did he offer?"

"Well, I think he is still pretty good-looking, in an Irish kind of way, though his freckles still show up," answered Nancy laughing. "I asked him if he had a wife and family and you'd never guess what he said. He grinned like he used to when the teacher caught him in some mischief, and tried to tell me that any young preacher must never pick out some special young woman from his congregation unless he wanted to split his church. He said that up to now, he never had had much time to look outside his congregation."

"What kind of a come-back did you have to that?" asked Retta. "I'll venture you gave him some spicy rejoinder."

"Oh, I merely reminded him that in the Bible the disciples were told to be fishers of men and no advice given about fishing for women. So I guessed he would just have to use whatever bait he could find and go wherever there was good fishing. Then he asked if he might come again, and I told him I would be in Kentucky the rest of the summer, but that October is a very lovely month in southern Ohio."

Both sisters assured her they could hardly wait until October; but Nancy was giving out nothing more on this topic. Preparations for the move to Canada went steadily forward. Zed was putting up posters announcing a public sale of such things as would be left after they had sorted out a carload to take.

"Sue, won't you be sorry to leave this home and farm where you've spent all your married life?" asked Nancy as they finished canning the last of the Elberta peach crop.

"Zed will be sorry to leave the farm where he was raised;

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

but the first years of my married life here were so unhappy, that I will be really glad to go. I shall be very sorry to leave my old neighbors, many of them have been so good to me. Take Mrs. Myer, the wife of Zed's tenant, who has been like a mother to me. She saw me through many an exciting crisis, when I was faced with a croupy baby and no telephone, or even the worry of unexpected company. If a sudden rash threatened my baby with measles or scarlet fever, I could snatch it from its crib and run down the hill to her. There were a few dreadful weeks when Mother Myer carried all my household burdens as well as her own. That was the time lightning struck here."

"My, my," exclaimed Retta. "I don't remember hearing you say much about that. When was it?"

"It happened the summer after Mother died; you and Nancy had plenty of worries of your own. Beth was not quite a year old. One of those sharp thunderstorms, which so often relieve our spells of hot weather, had come up quickly. Telling Junior to stay with the baby, I ran out into the rain to place a galvanized wash tub under the down spout at the corner of the house. The fresh, clean rain-water was pouring out and it was so nice for bathing babies.

"The next thing I was conscious of was of lying on my bed with a baby screaming in the next room. Bending over me, with very worried faces, were my husband and Mother Myer.

"Zed told me afterward how he had come in from the barn after the storm, and had found me lying unconscious six feet from the tub and both children screaming at the top of their lungs. Zed carried me into the house, sent Junior running for Mother Myer, and began applying restoratives. I'll never forget how Mother Myer helped me through the long, weary months it took to recover from that stroke of lightning. She's a poor

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

woman, but she's rich in neighborly kindness."

Nancy said, "I expect the Schlegals will miss you as much as any of your neighbors, because you boarded with them when you first came to teach at the Slippery Elm school. Then Zed and Henry Schlegal used to change work a lot, and I guess Zed did most of his courting at their house, didn't he? I know the Schlegals came over into Ohio for your wedding."

"Yes, they were very kind to me and have been good neighbors ever since. The twins, Johnny and Willie, were just six years old when I began to teach. Because they were twins, every visitor made much of them, and that made them very shy. They regularly crawled under their mother's bed when visitors came, and had to be pulled out before they could be exhibited. They thought they had to mind me because I was their teacher. Mr. Schlegal was so pleased when, on the last day of school, I had them come out in front of all the visitors and recite a poem together."

Retta asked; "Did Mr. Schlegal always talk in that very loud voice and repeat every sentence, or part of every sentence twice? 'It's a fine day, Mrs. Trelawney; it is, so it is, a fine day.' I don't see how his wife stands it."

"I heard his voice get very soft and low once," answered Sue. "It was a bright winter day, and the twins came running, begging me to come home with them. Tony, the next to the oldest boy, had been carried in from his rabbit hunting, dying from a gunshot wound. Mr. Schlegal stood looking at Tony, and he said in the mildest voice I ever heard him use; 'Mrs. Trelawney, what did we ever do, that made God do this to us?' I couldn't do anything but cry, but somehow they seemed to find that comforting. It won't be too easy to say goodbye to the Schlegal family."

Saying goodbye to old neighbors took up a good deal of

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

time during the last few weeks the Trelawneys spent in Kentucky. There was Donley, the neighbor who had driven so often with Zed to market in the city, or had sometimes been his good-natured rival to see who would get there first with his load of berries, or who would sell out first or get the best prices. Perhaps he was a little envious as Zed boasted about the wonderful soil of the Canadian prairies. There were the two Rooder girls, who had come to school to Sue and now had babies of their own. These young wives had looked to Sue for home-building standards as earnestly as they had studied under her direction in the Slippery Elm school.

Ranged among these old-time friends, stood awkward, lanky Sam Sapp, who had been another of Sue's pupils. He had come with the others to say goodbye to his old teacher. Sam had been a proverb, the very epitome of ambiguity, in Sue's family ever since we had heard his story. Sue had inquired how tall he was and Sam had drawled an answer that made him her favorite forever.

"Well," said Sam, "teacher measured me last year and he said I was five foot nine, or nine foot five, I cain't remember which. So I don't know my rightful height; but I'm durn sure both them figgers was in it." Sam had been equally uncertain about which class he belonged in: "Teacher last year put me in the Fourth Reader, seein' how I was so big; but I like the Second Reader better, 'cause I kin git my tongue round the little words easier." No doubt Sam would have been classed as a moron in later times; but there was never a morning too cold for him to have the school-room fire brightly burning when Sue arrived. It wasn't too easy to bid Sam a cheerful goodbye.

Early in September they attended once more the County Fair, held in the edge of the little town where they had gotten

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

their mail, attended church, done their shopping and transacted business at Uncle John Todd's bank. Nancy and Retta were almost as much interested in this pulling up of family stakes as Zed and Sue.

Driving past the Courthouse, Nancy exclaimed: "Remember how Father brought Retta and me here to apply for a license to teach. We thought this a very sleepy little town, and Father called it 'Stringtown on the Pike' from some story he had read. The examination was held at the Courthouse. It took two days and covered the common school branches and the History of Kentucky."

"The examination made quite an impression on me too," Retta said. The County Superintendent and two other examiners all discussed doubtful questions quite freely with spectators and sometimes with applicants. Since the list of questions was prepared by the State, some of the more knotty problems took the examiners by surprise. I remember how helpful these discussions were to us, especially when Father took part. He had taught school long enough to understand how to hint the answer to a stumbling pupil without directly telling him. The examiners took part in these friendly discussions and often argued the answers with Father in tones we could overhear."

"That wasn't quite honest, was it?" commented Zed. "I'm afraid Father must have let his determination get ahead of the Ten Commandments."

Sue always spoke up for Father. "He wasn't dishonest; but he knew that good teaching did not depend on ability to pass examinations. Ability to interest children in study is far more important, and he knew we would make good teachers. The examiners themselves paid little attention to the letter of the law. They agreed that Ohio applicants could hardly be expected to know Kentucky history."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Retta said, "Nancy, you tell them how you got such a good spelling grade on that examination."

"It wasn't my fault," answered Nancy. "I never could see why it isn't all right to spell Thursday with an i. My spelling paper got lost on this examination. After we had all hunted for it the examiners suggested that I might accept Retta's mark in that subject. I agreed, since Retta had made ninety-eight per cent. We both drove away from the Courthouse with good certificates. That very day, with the aid of Father's dignity and convincing eloquence, we were both hired for the coming winter."

After the girls had returned to Hamilton, Zed and Sue worked most of September before they were ready to leave the Kentucky farm to the care of a tenant.

"Well, Sue," exclaimed Zed, as they drove past the County Fair Ground, "guess we won't see many horse races where we are going." and, as a sudden thought struck him, "By gosh, I've got two shares in this Fair Ground Association, that cost me twenty-five dollars apiece. So we will always have a nest egg to come back to."

"Oh, Zed," Sue answered with sudden foreboding, "let's not plan to come back. That nest egg will be much more use to us in Canada. Uncle John Todd will give us cash for it." So they put the children in the Hamilton schools and Zed started for Canada, not too enthusiastic about a winter away from his folks.

October came on and Nancy watched the calendar. She had not forgotten that Timmy Fallon might soon be expected. When he arrived almost with the first of the month, the early frost had touched a magic wand to all the trees. Nancy and he walked amid the blaze of autumn color, and when he went back to his church, she wore a diamond, which seemed to her to glow with all of Nature's rainbows. Barely two weeks later the family were

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

shocked to read in the evening paper of the sudden death of this rising young preacher. The quick illness, contracted from a sick parishioner, had carried him off; and Nancy's diamond seemed to her a teardrop, imprisoning the white light of a distant star.

Half a decade later, she with Lakin her younger brother, driving across Ohio on an auto trip, stopped for half an hour in the town where Timmy died. As they sat in the beautiful yard of the Methodist church, Nancy told Lakin of the tiny sunbonnet she had given Timmy when he ran off with her bonnet in the Turkeyfoot schoolyard. "He said," continued Nancy, "when he gave me this ring, that he still had that doll bonnet put among his things; and that he hoped to keep his promise and give it to his wife. He hoped she would make one like it, only larger, to keep from getting freckled when she hung out the minister's washing."

Nancy was crying softly. "It is a beautiful church," she said.

Soon Spring was at hand. Baby Mary had thrived during the winter and was beginning to talk. The three sisters were enthusiastic about their trip to Canada. Retta had told them what the country was like, but they faced its hardships with confidence. Very carefully they put into their luggage the great variety of things they knew would be needed in the new home. It was an exciting journey for the three women and three children. For the latter it proved a very tiresome journey, too. Retta had said as they planned the trip, "Now, instead of going by way of Chicago and St. Paul, like I did last year, let's take this other route northward through Detroit. There we will be ferried across the river and entrain again at Windsor. To transfer through Chicago with all this hand baggage and three children might be difficult."

They found that this route took them a day longer; an extra

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

day with children who had grown weary and train-sick. Little Mary was really ill when they arrived at Moose Jaw. Zed met them at the train and her appearance shocked him. Ordinarily Mary had a complexion that reminded one of Longfellow's beautiful picture of the captain's little daughter, who perished in the "Wreck of the Hesperus." "Blue were her eyes as the fairy flax; Her cheeks like the dawn of day; Her bosom white as the hawthorn buds, That ope in the month of May." Now the roses were gone from her cheeks, and she looked very white and frail indeed.

Zed had spent a very lonesome winter without his family and this pale little daughter terrified him; "Why didn't you wait a few days until this baby was stronger?" he demanded crossly.

"She was quite well when we started," was Sue's response. "We have had a very hard and long trip, and none of the children have eaten as they ought to do and as they usually do. I'm worried about Beth, too. She was very feverish last night. But let's go on out to the claim as fast as we can."

There was nothing else to do. They could not turn back; they must go on and hope that this move to a new country had not been a grave mistake. Sue gathered her baby to her breast, sitting on the floor of the wagon-bed, told them to spread the buffalo robe over her head for protection against the terrible, steady wind; the penetrating, everlasting Arctic wind, which seemed to find every crack and opening, and even to penetrate through warm clothing to the very fountains of life. That fifty mile ride was a night-mare; but the shack to which they came struck her with stark despair. Dust covered all their furniture and bed clothes. Some water stood in a rain barrel, but they were cautioned to go slow, as it must do for cooking and drinking and washing. There was one large living room, evidently

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

used also for the kitchen. There was a ladder-like stairway, leading from this room through an opening in the ceiling to a loft above, which was used for sleeping quarters. It had been warm May weather when they left Ohio, but here it felt like December.

But at least there was a hot fire; Father and the boys had a good supper ready, and it was fine to see the glow of welcome in their faces. Some of Father's strength and steadfastness seemed to come into Sue's troubled mind. She spoke more cheerfully.

"Who baked this fine, salt-rising bread? It tastes as good, or maybe better, than Mother's baking used to taste."

Father admitted that the bread making was his job now-a-days. "I saw your Mother bake it for forty years. She often wondered what it would be like to see all her loaves of bread in one heap. Sally used to set her salt-rising in a warm place when she went to bed, and when she got up at sunrise, it was ready for the first mixing. No wonder one of the children called it 'sun-rising' bread. I really like to do the baking. Kneading the bread gives my muscles some exercise they were needing," and Father chuckled at his pun which had come in so handy. Then he went on to brag about the wheat.

"I think myself the bread is better than Sallie could make, because our wheat is better. You should see it grow! Forty, even fifty bushels to the acre, standing straight and high as a man's head. I sure never saw such wheat in all my farming experience."

Sue could hardly keep awake even to hear about the super-excellence of Canadian wheat. The weary travellers were quite ready for bed. Mary had settled into a restful slumber, undisturbed by a jerking locomotive or a jolting wagon. Beth had had a nap, but was muttering to herself feverishly, as she dreamed over the events of the tiresome trip. Junior had climbed to the

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

loft and was already making up for nights lost on the train.

The Canadian sunshine was bright the next morning and they woke refreshed. Little Mary had plainly taken a turn for the better. Zed led home the cow he had purchased from old man Williams and there was good milk for breakfast. The wind might blow cold at night, but daytime was warm and sunny.

Four men trying to keep house together, through a Canadian winter, had been a great strain on the ties of brotherhood and parenthood. They had about reached the breaking point when the arrival of the women of the family eased the tension.

In the early winter, Zed arriving with his car-load of stuff from Kentucky, found it a very tiresome task to get it hauled out to his claim and put under shelter. Sue's household stuff had not been too well packed to withstand such a long move.

Zed was not much interested in housekeeping. "Gosh durn it," he muttered as Father and the boys tried to help him get order out of chaos, "What do these silly women want with so many gimcracks? No man would bother to hang shades, drapes and lace curtains over windows made to let in the light. And what in heck, is the use of seventeen different kettles? A coffee pot and one stew pan would do the whole business." Slamming these things around helped express his short temper.

"Better take care of Sue's stuff, after taking the trouble to get it here. Remember it is going to be hard to replace," warned Dan.

"Trouble to get it here is danged right," retorted Zed. "Nothing but trouble since you took the crazy notion to drag us up here. We should have stayed in Kentucky, where we had things nice and comfortable."

Dan had a temper too; if it did not flash as quickly as Zed's, it burned more steadily and longer. "You are supposed to be a free moral agent. Nobody dragged you up here against your

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

will. Handle your stuff to suit yourself, and drag it back to Kentucky if you want to. It will be a good while before I offer to help a skunk like you again." He stalked off.

They both cooled off; but cold and hardship took heavy toll of good intentions. Father did most of the cooking, but Zed thought he depended too much on corn meal mush. "Why not have some corn bread instead of all this mush, mush, mush?" he demanded. "I'd give a year's pay for some good corn bread and pork roast."

"Corn bread is all right, and I have eaten pork all my life," said Father. "But my Bible does not sanction pork, and I think we're as just as well off without it. This isn't a pig country. Pigs need corn and not wheat."

"Bet you I'll have me some pork, Bible or no Bible, the next time I go to Moose Jaw," said Zed; and I'll have some corn bread, too, if I have to do my own damn cookin'." It was the results of such bickering that had caused Sue much dismay on her arrival. It was appalling to recall the fussing she had gone through with Zed's mother. Still, Zed seemed to find great pleasure in having his family around him.

"I'm sure glad to see you girls," Zed said after they had been there a few days. "Dad can bake good bread all right, but I can't get used to the everlasting tea drinking these English and Scotch settlers find satisfying. So it don't do much good to visit the neighbors, and I'm the only one of us four men who cares much for coffee. Many a morning this last winter I had to thaw the ice out of the coffee pot, while I ran around the cook stove to keep myself from freezing."

Nancy grinned at Zed's tale of the hardships he had endured. "I'm glad you had some way to find out how important women are in the world, if only because you missed good old coffee," she told him.

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Exploring this new country was really fun. Far and wide stretched the prairie, not level, but rolling like broad billows of the ocean. It was a never-ending temptation to walk another mile to see what lay beyond the next swelling rise; but there always seemed to be a next one. Gay clumps of flowers filled the more sheltered spots, and as warmer days came on, the vast, unplowed prairie looked like endless beds of flowers.

Mary, Beth and Junior were soon running over the ranch like a flock of young turkeys. They found an old buffalo trail and followed it to a rock, half as big as a wagon, with the dirt hollowed out around it, where the buffalo had had their wallow. There were still buffalo chips to gather for fuel. Sue was glad to see her youngsters growing well and strong. The Canadian sun and wind tanned them, until laughingly she said; "They are truly Brown children, if we do call them Trelawneys."

Rapidly new shacks sprang up on the horizon. The trail to Moose Jaw had become a well-marked road. Big Sandy McPherson's home south of them was better than some of the others. Joe Lennox and his family were not far away. Pete Swenson, a bachelor neighbor, came calling a few days after the women folks had arrived. Ostensibly he wanted to borrow a saw; Lakin thought he was more interested in these samples of womankind, so lately arrived. He was overcome with bashfulness when he met them, and hurried home with the saw, mumbling that he would bring it back soon.

Father's young trees had started to grow and all sorts of vegetables flourished in his big garden. Potatoes did wonderfully well, and so did turnips and cabbage. Rain did not often come during the summer, but the moisture which had accumulated from the heavy snows of winter, rose to the surface during the early summer months and kept the crops growing. Long days of sunshine brought plant life to rapid maturity.

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

The farm equipment Zed had brought enabled them to get in a good crop of wheat and oats, and go forward with the breaking for another year. The family group was big enough now to prevent any of them from being lonesome. A mail line had been established out of Moose Jaw, and a half breed Indian carried the mail to a branch post-office, some nine or ten miles away. He was not too enthusiastic about his job; so the mail was often days late.

One of the thrills of which the children never tired was seeing an Indian family stringing along the trail. They were certainly strung out, with rods of space between Papa, and Mama, carrying her youngest baby. These distances seemed longer because they generally dragged their tepee poles behind their unsaddled horses. These aboriginal inhabitants looked out of place among the incoming homesteaders. It really was a new country.

CHAPTER IX

Father liked to tease. When Nancy was little he said to her, "You have a metaphrastic mind. It will get you into trouble." Then he grinned and left her to worry over this big word. When Mother explained it only meant that she was very matter of fact and literal minded, she stopped worrying and took it as a compliment. Here is one of Nancy's metaphrastic letters to Eastern relatives.

June 19, 1910, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Dear Hugh and Winnie:

This is Sunday evening about half-past seven o'clock and I am sitting out by the side of Dan's shack. It does not get dark until about ten o'clock. Last Monday morning we brought Sue's and all our clothes up here and washed them, as Father has more rain water than the rest of them. I stayed with Sue every night last week as Zed was working at another ranch. I came to the boys' shack every day, and carried water from the well which is about as far away as the length of a city block. One day in the afternoon, Retta and I took a walk down by a little lake which is about one and a half miles from Father's shack. It is a beauty. We could see ten or fifteen wild ducks. The lake is among some hills and not very far from the larger "Lake of the Rivers."

Saturday I brought Mary up to Dan's shack and kept her until afternoon. She was real good and took a nap before and after dinner. Sue baked while I kept Mary. I helped Father some with his fence. He is putting a wire fence around an acre and a half of land he calls his "truck patch." He set out the strawberries I brought,

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

and was glad to get the rhubarb too.

Saturday night I stayed at Sue's. Zed came late. Sunday we all went down to the barn and read pieces from the Companion and the Post. We went to the barn because it is nice and cool and has plenty of hay to sit on. Sunday was real hot. About three thirty in the afternoon we went down to Sue's to have Sunday School. Retta read out of the Bible, we sang some songs and repeated the Lord's Prayer. Zed played some pieces on his violin. We want to have some neighbors come in next Sunday and have Sunday School again.

Then we took a walk, Sue, Dan, I, Junior and Beth. We went clear across Dan's farm. The crops look fine and are all planted now. The flax is coming up. They turned the horses loose on the prairie Sunday and Dan found them that evening over near Swenson's. We have not seen many of the neighbors yet.

I have not been bothered with mosquitoes much. Mary seems to stand them pretty well, but we put mosquito bar over her if we take her out of doors much. Dan's birthday passed and he got a card from Jessie, but would not read it to us. Suppose you will be thinking of going to the University at Madison soon; be sure to send us your address there. When we ask Mary where Uncle Hugh and Aunt Winnie are, she says, "Gone bye-bye." Now she will go to any of her uncles, to grandpa, or her father.

Love to all, Nancy.

P. S.

I have dinner on the stove cooking; beans, codfish, potatoes, rice pudding, prunes, and maybe pie. Last night we had an electrical storm and it hailed a little. Lakin set a hen before we came and the chicks are hatching now.—N.

One day Nancy saw Lakin starting out with team and wagon in the bright, morning sunshine. "Where are you going?" she called.

"Down a few miles into the South Country," he answered.

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

"I have to get a load of oats for feed. Wouldn't you like to go along?"

Nancy thought this a fine chance to see some of the surrounding country, so she got her sunbonnet and climbed up on the seat. Lakin explained that they were short of feed because of the hard time they had at first trying to break the prairie with two horses. After driving an hour, he said: "I must leave you and the team here for a little while and get across to that shack beyond the plowed land. There's no road in from this side, but I think the fellow who lives there either has oats to sell, or can tell me who has. You stay here, and when I come back I'll know how we can get in there, or if we must go farther on."

Nancy was country bred, but to sit on a high wagon seat and hold the reins over a team of big horses in this lonely spot soon got on her nerves. The minutes dragged into hours, and the sun got higher and higher. It was fortunate that the team was willing to rest quietly switching at the flies that annoyed them. What had become of Lakin? Had he gotten lost? Why didn't he come back? It must be long past dinner time. What would she do if a storm came up? At last she saw Lakin coming toward her from another direction. Evidently he had tramped a long way and was tired.

"Well, I found some oats, way over two sections from here. We will have to make quite a drive to get to the granary where it is stored." He took the lines and started the team. "Sorry, Nancy, to have kept you so long, but I had a hard time to find the oats. Then I had to wait still longer till the owner got home. Guess you are pretty hungry without any dinner."

"Oh, I can stand it if you can," said Nancy. "I should not have come along, I suppose; but I thought this would be a good chance to see the country. Now, I've seen this part till I know

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

it by heart."

The horses were glad to go on too, and after a few more miles they found the oats and the owner. A new difficulty arose about how the grain was to be measured. Neither party had a bushel or half bushel measure. The owner finally said; "My wife has a galvanized wash tub that is marked twenty gallons. Since eight gallons are a bushel, that tub level full should make two and a half bushels." Lakin agreed to this makeshift and soon they had the oats loaded.

It was already sunset when they got started home at last. Dark clouds were rolling across the western sky and Lakin fidgeted. "I'm afraid we're in for a bad time. That looks like one of the electrical storms that are not very pleasant to be out in, and home is a good many miles away." As the threat of the storm continued to grow he said, "There is an empty shack, not far from here, that the mail carrier uses when he is caught on the trail over night. Maybe we can get in there before the storm strikes."

But in a few minutes the storm was on them; vivid lightning, sharp claps of thunder, and a downpour of icy rain. Fortunately they could see the deserted shack by the lightning flashes and were glad of its one-room shelter. Lakin unhitched the horses from the wagon and tied them so they could eat a feeding of oats. They found the door unlocked and the hut bare of all furniture except a rough table. By this time Lakin had a raging headache and could hardly sit up. He stretched out on the table and Nancy found an empty box on which she huddled during the chilly night.

At home the folks had not been greatly worried when Nancy and Lakin did not show up for lunch; but when supper time came and passed with no sign of the wanderers, Retta and Sue grew quite uneasy. As darkness came on and the threatening

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

sky showed the approaching storm, the family gathered in Father's room for a family council.

"Where do you suppose they are? What ought we to do?" Retta questioned nervously. "It's useless to guess where they are," said Dan. "Lakin was not sure where he would find oats for sale. We heard that several settlers in the South Country had plenty of oats, and he started off in that direction. If we knew where to look, we might start searching; but they'll come drifting in, soon."

"Accidents can strike out of a clear sky in farm life. We've all seen them do that," said Sue.

"That's true enough," said Father, "not only on the farm but in all of life. Often and often, tragedy treads fast on the heels of comedy. I remember one summer evening on the old farm when that came dreadfully clear to me."

"Tell us what you are thinking of, Father," said Sue.

"It was the summer after Zed and you were married. We were all at supper in the brick kitchen when you and Zed drove up unexpectedly. Retta had been entertaining us with one of her tales and we were all in a gale of laughter. So we set extra plates for you and Zed, and Retta retold her tale for your benefit.

"But out of the fun came tragedy. Sallie was choking. A morsel had lodged in her trachea, and her blackening face proved that this was no joke. I was seized with panic. It seemed so dreadful I could not move nor think. I remember Nancy cried out, 'John, Mother's choking.' Still I did not know what I could do. Sallie staggered toward me and gasped in a whisper, 'Lift me up under the arms,' I caught her up and shot her toward the ceiling and she came down laughing. The quick pressure on her thorax had brought instant relief."

"I remember how her house slippers fell off and hit the floor before she did," cried Retta. "I remember too, how we

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

laughed at Nancy for calling you John in her excitement. I even remember the joke I had been telling on myself, about walking home from the Bee Run school one evening. Usually I rode horseback, so absentmindedly, I took the longer way home, intending to water old Ned at the cross roads watering trough instead of pumping him a drink when I got home. I was so surprised when I got to the trough and found I had no horse to water!"

"I was always slower to act in a crisis than your Mother," said Father. "I recall when Dan was about two years old we had just sat down to dinner, when Sallie jumped up for something and left a cup of hot coffee standing by her plate. Before we could stop him, Dan had pulled it over into his face. It was scalding hot. We were all paralyzed but Sallie. She whirled round, snatched Dan up and thrust him head first into a bucket of cold spring water standing there. Impulsively I said, 'If he isn't dead, you'll kill him'; but the doctor told us Sallie's quick action had saved Dan from a very deep burn."

"For goodness sake," cried Sue; "can't we talk about something more cheerful? Don't you really think we ought to do something about Lakin and Nancy, Father?"

"No, I really think they will take care of themselves," said Father. "There's only one thing we can do; we can go to bed and say a prayer for their safety. I'm sure they'll come through all right."

The worry was soon over for it was the season when nights were short. Back in the mail carrier's shack, Lakin and Nancy were glad to see the breaking dawn and the end of the rain. They drove home to a hearty breakfast and were not greatly harmed by this adventure.

This was a summer of great pleasure for the entire family. They were extremely clannish and to be all so near each other

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

and united in the experience of pioneering afforded them much satisfaction. Though they were very busy, there was abundant time for laughter and reminiscence.

Father was certainly in his element. With his children and grandchildren about him he lived again his seven decades of life. The loneliness of the years since Sallie had left him slipped from him, and memory renewed his youth; sometimes he even boasted a little about it. Junior said to him one day, "Grandpa, did you ever have any fights when you were a boy?"

"Well, Sonny," said Father, "not many folks want to fight a man who looks as big and strong as I do; but I guess there were times when some of my neighbors would have been glad to give me a sound thrashing. I was always too obstinate and sure my way was right."

"Tell me about one of those times. I don't get much chance to see any fights way off here by ourselves," lamented the boy.

"I'll tell you about one time when I guess I ought to have been thrashed. I've been ashamed of it ever since I came home and told your grandmother about it and she scolded me plenty."

"Go ahead," said Junior. "I'm all ready."

"Once I took passage on a bus for Cincinnati, instead of going by steamboat as I usually did. Most passengers paid their fares when they got on the bus, but I told the driver I would pay him at the end of the trip. After a while we came to a muddy steep hill, and the driver said that all of the men must get out and help push the bus up the hill. They got out but did a lot of grumbling. I told him I would not get out or pay until he fulfilled his contract and delivered me in Cincinnati. I guess nothing but my size saved me from having to fight him and some of my neighbors, who finally put their shoulders to the wheel and got me and the bus up the hill."

"I like that story," said Junior, "and I'm all ready for

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

another."

"Well, here's one that shows me using a little more sense, I hope. It is about another trip to Cincinnati. This time I had a dozen fat steers to take to market; so I took along Sam Grailey, a big colored boy, to help drive the cattle. We drove them down to the river boat, and when the boat landed them on the Cincinnati wharf, we drove them out to the Stock Market. We sold the steers for a good price. Sam had never been in Cincinnati before so I offered to show him the sights of the city before the boat started back.

"Sam thought this would be fine. Soon a man on the street spoke to us and asked us if we lived in the country. When we told him we did, he said he was looking for a good man living in the country to act as their agent for a new cloth his company was making, a very fine cloth that would make a beautiful suit. He told me the company would be glad to give me a suit if I would show it to my friends. It seemed a good offer; so Sam and I followed the man into what he called his 'store'. It looked more like a saloon to me. The salesman kept talking very fast about the wonderful new cloth, and urged me to be seated in the back of the room, until a tailor could come in and measure me for a free suit.

"But I knew I had a purse full of cash that I had gotten for the steers, so I stayed near the door. I was getting suspicious of so much glib talk and thought maybe the whole thing was set up for a robbery or possibly a murder. So I made an excuse about being in a hurry to catch the boat. Sam and I backed out of the 'store', and we sure breathed much freer when we were on the street again.

"I said to Sam, 'I have a notion they were fixing to rob us and maybe kill us. That big arm chair looked like it had a trap door under it that would have dropped me into the cellar. I

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

thought we might have to fight to get out.'

"Sam said to me, 'Yes, boss, it suah looked bad; but I had my razor half open in my pocket.'

"So, Junior," said Father, "let this be a lesson to you never to try and get something for nothing."

Junior commented, "But you didn't have to fight after all. I'd like a real fighting story sometime."

Father grinned at Sue who had been listening in. "Takes after his father and his grandfather both, doesn't he? I never thought you'd raise a fighting youngster. Junior, I think you'd better go out and try to knock over a gopher with a stone. That's the kind of fight for a little boy to take part in."

"I'd like a story about grandmother; she wasn't always in a fight, was she?" Beth demanded.

"No, your grandmother was not much of a fighter," said Father; "but she was quick to speak out when she thought a thing was wrong. In fact she was quick to speak. There was one time she had been scolding Nancy for trying to April fool the rest of us by pretending to be a visitor and knocking at the front door. So when she heard another knock, she said, 'I'll fix her'; and she flung the door open saying loudly, 'Go to the kitchen door, you big nuisance'; and there stood not Nancy but the new preacher." Father laughed to himself at the recollection.

Nancy, who had joined the group, laughed too, and said; "I don't think many of you know this story about Mother. It happened after we children were all grown up and Mother was more given to absent mindedness and to lack of observation than when she was younger.

"I had been on a visit to Aunt Sis and stayed away from home a week. On the journey home, I remembered that Lakin was to have his Commencement program at the local high

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

school that evening. I knew that Father and Mother would be there to hear the Commencement program; so I saw a good chance to see Lakin graduate and then ride the three miles home with the family. My train down the river was a little late, so I got to the hall after the rest of the family were seated and took my place a little back of Father and Mother.

"A neighboring school superintendent made an eloquent address to the graduates. There were the usual musical numbers and Lakin closed the program with the valedictory. This was the part for which Mother had worked and lived for many months. Lakin was her baby, and his fine head was still covered with the curls of his childhood; much darker and persistently flattened out, but still beautiful to Mother. His dark eyes, another inheritance from her, were bright with fun and charm. She was so proud of this big boy, tall now almost as Father and headed for college; no doubt headed for the presidency of the United States, the way she thought about him. She was so proud of him that she never realized that I had come in and sat down behind her.

"Turning at the close of the program, Mother glanced almost unseeing at me. I was crowding forward to speak to her and I had on a new hat. She looked at me vaguely as if my face was very familiar and I was someone she ought to know, who was about to congratulate her on Lakin's brilliant performance.

"'Now,' said Mother as she grasped my outstretched hand firmly, 'now, you must excuse me. I know I have met you somewhere, but your name just slips my mind.'

"I was never so shocked in my life. I cried out, 'Why, Mother, don't you know me? I'm Nancy, and I've only been away from home a week!' Mother always claimed she was really looking at Lakin, standing so straight on the stage, among his

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

school friends. Certainly, he filled her mind's eye at least."

June and July slipped away with a hundred homely tasks. The experiment in growing flax proved satisfactory. Here was one crop gophers did not eat. These bright-eyed, little rat-like creatures infested the prairie country. They were too numerous and agile to destroy by shooting; poison was more sure, but a slow way to fight them. At this time the ranchers were too scattered to make any very successful attacks on these little pests. It was restful to look on a blue sea of blossoming flax and know the gophers would leave it alone.

Another advantage in raising flax was the higher price the seed brought, although the yield was smaller, compared with wheat; a very important consideration to farmers who had to haul their produce fifty miles to a railroad. There was a threshing outfit now in the neighborhood, and the boys were soon hauling wheat and flax into Moose Jaw, their nearest railroad depot. It was a long haul; but grain was bringing a good price and they had been running very short of cash. In the hottest part of summer they replenished their fuel supply and dug another well.

In August Retta and Nancy went home to Ohio, to resume teaching for another winter. Sue and her girls cried over the departing aunts and made them promise to come again the next summer. Father's cabbage, potatoes and turnips must be stored for winter use in rough cellars under the shacks. In Ohio they had been accustomed to bury their cabbage and potatoes in pits, covered with straw and dirt. These Canadian winters were too long and severe for such a practice. Snow was often flying in September and the drifts were deep till latter March.

It was surprising how fat and contented horses could live on the open range during these long winters, with only such shelter as straw stacks provided. One day Dan and Lakin set

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

out to hunt their horses since they had not come up to the straw stacks for several days. It did not do to let them wander too far from home, and they hoped to find some neighbor who had seen them. The boys had not yet grown weatherwise in this new country, and failed to heed the signs of a coming blizzard. From the fury with which it struck them, it seemed sure to be a very hard storm. Caught several miles from home, they saw they must give up their search for the horses and find shelter for themselves until the storm abated.

Half-blinded and almost frozen they came at length upon a settler's shack and knocked for admission. In that country, no one turned away a stranger in a blizzard; but the surly Scotchman who peered out of the slightly opened door was evidently too drunk to remember the laws of hospitality. He answered their questions with gruff profanity, and did not invite them to come in. The boys were too proud to invite themselves, though they were half-minded to drag him out into the blizzard to see how he liked it.

"It would serve him right, but it would probably be murder," said Dan. "Let's take a chance and backtrack; we'll have the wind at our backs. I think we can make it home all right."

So these stiff-necked Buckeyes made the terrible trip back to their shack where Father scolded them and helped rub their frost bites with snow, before he let them thaw out by his hot stove. No great harm had come to them and both of them had a more healthy respect for a Saskatchewan blizzard, as well as an everlasting contempt for a drunken Scotchman, who had failed to show common humanity.

This second winter they thought they had touched the lowest point of hardship in all their homesteading experience. It was the first winter for Sue and her children and the trials of pioneer life made deep imprint on mind and heart. The bitter

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

cold that hammered endlessly upon them seemed to Sue a giant Frost King knocking day and night to come in and sit by their fire.

"Look, Mother," said Beth, "every nail in our wall that Dad drove in for a hook has its head covered with white frost. Do you think they are getting decorated for Christmas?"

Sue knew it would not be a rich Christmas; not a chance for a Christmas tree and only home-made gifts. Snow balls and ice would have to do for decorations. She was melting snow to wash dishes with, and when she threw her dish water out it rattled down like hail upon the encrusted snow. In these very short days there might be a little patch of sunlight from her south window on the rough pine floor, moving slowly with the sun. As January and February brought longer days it seemed a real pleasure to move her kitchen rocker with the sunlight.

Still, there was a clean smell to the air out of doors, a relief from the constant odor of tar-paper and new lumber that permeated the indoor atmosphere in all these new, unpainted and unplastered shacks. Occasionally there came calm days in winter, a rest from the steady drive of the north wind. With the coming of the spring of 1911, they felt definitely on the up-grade. They had proved that they could stay with the job they had undertaken. It was surprising how well they had all kept in spite of bitter cold and a very limited diet. It was fun to be alive; soon another crop would be going into the ground and the aunties might be expected up from the States.

Sue turned to Dan one day in the early spring. "Do you suppose Retta will be coming North again this summer with Nancy? You know before we got started on this homesteading business, she always spent her summer vacations with Uncle Newt and Aunt Sis in the Bluegrass country. They will think Retta has deserted them, and they always were so good to her."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

"What do you mean, 'so good to her'?" demanded Dan.
"Retta always paid for the dresses she got."

Sue spoke judicially; "Yes, she paid for the material; but Aunt Sis did the dress-making while Retta did the cooking. I remember I went up there to get help with my wedding outfit, and I haven't had as nice a dress since. Aunt Sis could plan and make pretty dresses, if she did have a sharp tongue. She really talked me into marrying Zed; I was about ready to back out. I believe she is just as eager to see Retta married."

Zed had been eating down at the Williams' ranch much of the time; but all the rest of the family were having Sunday dinner together when they began talking on this topic. Father spoke up: "I never did understand why Nancy and Retta are not married. They're both fine looking, smart girls, earning their own living teaching school. Their mother was only nineteen when she married me. They will be old maids before they know it."

"I guess they are not so scared of being old maids as I was," said Sue. "I was only twenty-two but I thought I was already an old maid, and it was a very hateful name. A girl gets more sense as she gets older; besides I haven't seen any wonderful chances among the old bachelors who live in the shacks around here."

"How about our friend the Sea Captain?" queried Lakin. "He was in here pretty frequently last summer. Do you think he was interested?"

Sue sputtered; "Why, he's a regular stick, with his 'Thank you' and 'Pahdon' every other word. Anyway he's much too old for either of our sisters."

"Beggars can't be choosers," retorted Lakin. "Maybe Nancy and Retta are too independent, and think teaching easier than keeping house."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Dan grew confidential; but the glint in his eye might have warned Sue that he liked to tease as well as he liked the dinners she cooked. "The last time I went up to see Aunt Sis, I asked her plain out why she didn't marry Retta off to one of those rich tobacco farmers that were so thick in that country. Aunt Sis fired up real smart, and her black eyes fairly shot out sparks. She didn't wait a minute to answer me; I guess she had thought about it quite awhile."

"Well, what did she say," questioned Sue and Lakin together.

"She said," drawled Dan, " 'You know, Dan, every time your Uncle Newt or I bring a man in here, Retta turns her head and acts real disgusted if he happens to say 'damn'. And most of 'em do that every other breath. I do wish John had not raised his children so pernickety about their language. That's no way for a girl to get married.' Uncle Newt and I laughed out loud, but Aunt Sis didn't seem to think it was funny."

"Neither do I," said Sue. "Zed has been saying 'damn' a lot this winter, and often something worse with it. I don't want Junior to grow up like that."

"Even if Dad swears, he does not allow me to," contributed Junior. "But then, I know how anyway."

This was one of Sue's worries. She looked at Father whose strength and poise never failed to comfort her. She recalled an incident when the November days were growing darker with less of the life-giving sunshine. It was afternoon, and the three children had been playing in the loft. Sue had been busy around her stove. Suddenly for no reason, entirely without volition, it seemed, as she recalled it, she left the stove and stepped beside the ladder and directly under the opening that led to the loft; when instantly, there was a scream from the children above and Mary fell through the opening into her mother's arms. The child

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

had been playing too near the opening.

Strange and startling that the mother had arrived at just the instant to catch her baby safely. There came into her mind the words she had often heard Father quote: "And He shall give His angels charge concerning thee and in their hands they shall bear thee up."

There drifted through her thought an old lullaby she had often sung to her babies in the Kentucky farmhouse. Softly she sang again to these larger babies:

"Lullaby and good night, With roses bedight,
With lilies bested is baby's wee bed:
Lay thee down now and rest, May thy slumber be blest.
Lay thee down now and rest, May thy slumber be blest."

CHAPTER X

In southwestern Saskatchewan the spring of 1911 brought a good farming season. By the time Nancy and Retta had arrived to spend their brief summer, wheat and oats were up and doing fine, and there was quite a respectable acreage of them. To finish the breaking of the prairie sod was a big task; but the boys felt sure they could have one hundred eighty acres ready for the crop of 1912.

The weather in this dry farming region seemed to the settlers a great roulette table, whirling them good fortune or bad, with mad ruthlessness. Father said to Zed and the boys, as they stood in the doorway of his shack, and watched the quick oncoming of a sudden electrical storm; "Reminds me of the gambling I saw on the river steamboats in my early days. Fortunes were swept away there in a few minutes, just as those clouds are threatening to bring hail down to flail out our wheat crop."

They all knew what a dreadful thing hail could be. It could clean up a good crop in a few minutes. In later years, hail insurance, though costly, brought some security. In these earlier years, hail insurance had not been promoted among most of the ranchers in this province. They had not yet learned to co-operate with their neighbors against this enemy.

The face Dan turned toward Father was tragic in its bitterness. "We can't do a thing to stop it or to help ourselves. All our hard work may go for nothing in ten minutes. That year

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

I tried to farm the old home place in Ohio, drought did the same thing to me, though it took ten weeks to do it, instead of ten minutes. I guess farmers are gamblers all right, with all the cards stacked against them."

Father pointed to the changing clouds. "Look, there will be no hail to hurt us this time. All we will get will be some rain, a blessing instead of a disaster. No, son, it is not true that all the cards are stacked against us farmers. We have the Divine promise: 'While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease!'

Zed said, "Drought is one of the most terrible enemies that farmers have to fight. The reason it is so terrible, is because our puny human hands can do so little to control it. These new-fangled schemes they call dry farming will be about our only hope, if a real dry spell hits us." Zed did not have too much faith in modern scientific methods.

Lakin had been looking out over their green, young wheat fields, bordered by tall, ripening prairie grass. "There's one thing we need to do, before that prairie grass gets much drier. We ought to plow a fire guard between it and our crop and buildings. A prairie fire might do us a lot of damage."

"Oh, I don't think there is much danger from that quarter," was Dan's rejoinder. "It's mostly in story books you read about prairie fires being so terrible. It doesn't look to me that there's really anything to be much worried about, so far as fire is concerned." But he yielded to Lakin and the next day they started plowing a narrow fire guard between their buildings and the unbroken prairie.

It was slow work turning over enough of the tough sod to make even a slight barrier against any fire hazard. Before they had done as much as seemed necessary, the danger was upon

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

them. Coming out of their shack, after the noon meal, the boys were dismayed to see smoke and flame rising from the meadows less than half a mile away and with a steady Canadian breeze bringing it directly toward their building.

Some careless hunter or traveler had fired at a prairie hen or dropped a lighted cigarette in the dry grass and the slow sparks had been fanned into a blaze. Now neighbors were hurrying toward the fire with shovels and wet blankets. "I'm glad we have that fire guard even if it isn't very wide," shouted Dan to Lakin as they joined the fire fighters.

"I'm afraid it isn't wide enough to stop the fire," said Lakin, "but it will make it easier for us to stop it wherever it does jump over. Who'd ever thought prairie grass would make this hot a fire?"

The whole family were out now fighting as best they could the oncoming line of flame. It was hot work for a few minutes and these new pioneers were surprised to see how much help even a poor fireguard offered. Almost as soon as it had flashed upon them the danger was over as they got the fire under control. "Whew," said Zed, wiping sweat and smoke from his face, "I'm going to plow me a fire guard right away."

That evening as the family gathered in front of Father's shack to enjoy the long summer twilight, Lakin took up again the thought he had left unfinished a day or two before. "When we were talking about the farmers' enemies in Canada we left off the list a good many that we may need to think about. Ever since we had to fight that prairie fire so unexpectedly I have been wondering what foe will hit us next."

"Don't trouble trouble until trouble troubles you," quoted Zed. "These damn mosquitoes that swarm around us in clouds keep me so mad I'm ready to fight any time. The smoke from the prairie fire drove them away for a few hours at least."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

"Well," said Dan, "we all certainly get weary fighting the mosquitoes. I don't think it does much good to swear at them, though I might be willing to try if I thought it a good remedy. I believe they cause more profanity than any other trouble in this province. This smudge we keep going in the evening is some protection. I just can't work with a veil draped round my face like many of these settlers do. I wonder if these pesky mosquitoes will stay with us all summer?"

"When frost comes, they will go," Father said, "but I'm more worried about frost hitting our wheat, than I am about the mosquitoes. Even a light frost with grain just coming into the milk might be a real disaster."

"Cold is King in this country," said Dan. "He puts a very heavy tax on us which we must pay just to keep warm enough to stay alive during these long winters. We spend a large part of our summer energy collecting fuel to pay his winter taxes. Now if old King Cold jumps in on our wheat crop too, I guess we might as well give up."

Dan was usually so cheerful and jolly that any show of pessimism from him cast a gloom on all of them. Lakin, too, was in a black mood. "Gophers and grasshoppers to eat up our crops and gardens, prairie fires to burn us out, mosquitoes to pester the life out of us, and the cold, hunger and solitude of these terrible winters, make up quite a list of tough enemies for us to fight, in addition to drought and hail which we can't fight. I can't help wondering what unsuspected foe may be lying in wait for us next."

"I don't think we need any more," said Zed; "but I heard old man Williams mention Rust in the wheat, which seems to have crossed the Line into some of the ranches south of us."

Sue felt that something must be said on the brighter side. "I'm thankful we keep well and strong, and that nothing has

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

really hurt our crop yet, in spite of the enemies that may threaten it. I believe that I never knew you men to have better appetites than you have in this climate. You are always grumbling that you never get sleep enough in these short summer nights; so I move that we adjourn this sob session and all go off to bed."

On this more cheerful note the evening ended and they went off to bed; but Father lay awake a long time, remembering the discouragement that seemed to hold both Dan and Lakin in its grip. If he had not been so eager to pay off his old accumulation of debts, perhaps he would have thrown his influence against this move to Canada. Perhaps he had been willing to sacrifice the lives of his children on the altar of his selfishness. He had often read in his Bible how Abraham had been ready to sacrifice Isaac, and how Jephtha's rash vow had cost the life of his only daughter. Was he acting with any more vision than these ancient men, who had seemed to him so mistaken in their faith?

His conscience put the question and he debated it long, and slept at last with it still troubling him. More than once in the next year or two these doubts shook him, but what was there to do but go forward? Retreat would only spell the greater disaster; to hold fast was all that might save them.

Perhaps none of Nature's calamities irritated the Brown family as much as some of the human institutions around them. One of these was the herd law which permitted stock to run loose all winter. Much worse was the way it was administered in their district, permitting stock to run loose in summer, also. Dan threatened to use his shotgun, but they all knew that such drastic measures would bring trouble and maybe bloodshed. But the boys felt some action must be taken to prevent live stock from neighboring ranches feeding on their growing crops.

Dan said to Lakin, "I've been reading up on this herd law, and think we can do something about it. Now this chap

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

Buchanan, who administers the law in this improvement district, should have called an election last winter. But he knew he could stay in office until his successor was elected, so he did not call an election. He hasn't much use for homesteaders and stock runs free."

"Yes, I know that," said Lakin, "but what's the cure? The council for this district appointed Buchanan and seem to like the way he is behaving. Could we change the council?"

"That's my idea," said Dan. "The law provides that when no election has been held, citizens may petition for councillors to be appointed. Let's petition for some of our friends."

The scheme worked fine. The government at Regina granted the petition and appointed the suggested council. Buchanan was much surprised to find out that he had lost his job. With a new administrator and a friendly council the herd law could really be enforced and stray stock impounded until the owners took proper care of them.

Now there began to be talk of railroad building to supply these wheat farmers with shipping facilities. It had been a truly back-breaking task to haul wheat to Moose Jaw and transfer it to a box car, often waiting hours to get a turn in the long line of unloading wagons. A big wagonload of wheat might easily bring more than a hundred dollars; but homesteaders felt they had earned many times that much in the completed transaction. They all hoped that at least one branch line would be built. Eventually they had several completed by the two transcontinental lines.

It was very irritating to have mail so hard to get. Father liked to read. Cooking, hoeing his big truck garden, helping when he could with farm tasks in summer, keeping up fires in winter, washing his own shirts and socks, and cleaning his shack, left few minutes in his day for reading; still, he always

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

crowded some in. The half-breed who carried the mail into this South country once a week, was far from reliable. Once in two weeks seemed to him good enough, or at longer intervals in bad weather. So Father wrote the government, asking for a post office in his neighborhood. Their answer was prompt. They offered him the job of postmaster if he would furnish the office and suggest a suitable name. He accepted and hung out a sign on his shack; SUE P. O. SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA.

"I'm not sure whether I should accept this new job or not," he said to Sue. The Canadian government granted my request so promptly that I feel I really should not turn them down; but I'm a pretty old man for such a job—soon be seventy-five you know."

Sue had an answer ready. "I don't believe the government cares how old you are. People say a woman is no older than she looks, neither are you. You may have been born just after Andy Jackson left the Presidency, but no one would guess it."

"There's another thing about it that makes me hesitate," said Father. "You know how I hate profanity and tobacco. Many men think because a post-office is a public place they can turn it into a loafing place. I don't think I am willing to put up with that, since I have to sleep, cook and live in the Post-office."

"Yes, that will be a hardship," said Sue. "We could curtain off part of it and give you some privacy."

"I'll put up a sign, no smoking or swearing. You've heard me tell what a hard time I had quitting tobacco after using it twenty years. Let other folks either quit or enjoy their tobacco somewhere else. I don't want to be a crank, but I intend to put up that sign and keep it up."

So he put up his sign; but some men did not stop to read it, or reading, neglected to heed. Many of these homesteaders

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

were lonesome and homesick boys far from home, or young fathers anxious to build homes. If rough or uncouth they were goodhearted; it was only occasionally necessary to admonish them to behave on government property.

One big rancher, who had been soaking up whiskey for several days before he rode in for his mail, was quarrelsome and stormed at Father. "Can't any blanketey-blank son-of-a-gun come up here and give me orders. I'll do what I please in this lousy post-office. If it wasn't for your gray hair, old man, I'd teach you how to be a postmaster in his Majesty's Dominion." Father stepped out from behind the rough desk and box which held the few letters and papers for which he was responsible. "Pay no attention to my gray hairs," said he, laying off his coat.

The braggart took one look at Father's broad shoulders, his six feet of clean bone and muscle and backed down. "I did not mean anything by what I said," he muttered. "I always talk too much anyway and my wife told me to hurry back home." He seemed to be glad to get out.

The only other room in Father's shack was the attic where Dan and Lakin slept sometimes. It was so low that they bumped their heads on the roof if they sat up suddenly in bed. Each boy had a legal residence on his own claim, consisting of another shack built to meet the requirements of the law. Often they ate at Father's or Sue's place.

Folks who came for their mail sometimes sat on Father's bed, until he put up another sign. This sign read: "Don't sit on this bed. Then you won't get my bugs and I won't get yours." This was not merely facetious; it was hard to keep clothing and bedding from getting infested. Stopping places were often crawling with body lice and bed bugs.

Zed often went over to the Williams ranch and worked for a few days though Sue said that she felt it meant more of a vaca-

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

tion than a job to him. Sue kept her family about her and did her best to teach daily lessons to the two older children. With her two brothers and Father at hand, she had a sense of security amid the roughest winter weather.

Little Mary worried about Indians, though none had bothered them. Indians in this southern half of the Province were not so numerous as they were in the northern and more wooded part. The mounted police saw to it that they behaved themselves; but Mary's imagination took no account of this protection. Every night she begged her mother to look for Indians before they went to bed. Sue humored her, feeling some of her nervous tension. She would hold the lamp and look under the bed and the table. No Indians there; still Mary was not satisfied. "I think they're in the cellar." Patiently Sue led the child to the heavy trapdoor, lifted it and let her light shine down. "Now, look, honey, there are no Indians there." Reassured, Mary slept restfully.

This youngest child of hers had given Sue much concern in the years of rough pioneering. At first, it was a struggle against cold and lonesomeness; then other fears, so many of them, beset them. It was so easy for a little child to get lost in the vast wheat field. Wheat much taller than the child and stretching over wide fields might hide Mary from her mother for hours. Then who knew what other dangers lurked in this prairie land? One day Sue saw a coyote, slinking in the edge of the growing oats. Zed's shotgun stood handy; quickly she sighted it and shot. The coyote gave a yelp, rolled over and over, then jumped up and ran out of sight.

To provide her three youngsters with play opportunities bothered Sue. In summer they could roam over the prairie and find plenty of activity following the men at work; but the long months of winter made recreation a problem. Fortunately Sue

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

could use her imagination. "Now, Mama, tell us about California," they would beg; and Sue, who had never seen the reality, pictured that land of never-ending delight, in a long continued story. How many bright days they spent in California among its orange groves and wonder lands, while Saskatchewan blizzards shut them indoors!

Summer or winter there was always the problem of obtaining proper food for these growing youngsters. Father's vegetable garden had been a great help to all of them. Even if adults can exist on meat and potatoes, children need variety. Canned and dried fruit was hardest to provide and fresh fruit was hoarded with great care. The winter of 1911-12 seemed very long, and Sue was glad to see the lengthening patch of sunshine on her window-sill which showed that spring was coming soon.

Lakin had decided to give up his preemption and be satisfied with a homestead of one hundred and sixty acres, rather than spend three more years in pioneering. One could satisfy legal requirements for a homestead in three years, but a pre-emption took three more, and gave the settler another one hundred sixty acres. Lakin planned to teach again in the following winter. Dan thought differently. He too, might teach part of each year to get some ready cash, if the crop could first be saved; six months residence on homestead or preemption was counted as a year. He was holding on to his three hundred twenty acres. Zed and Father were both staying and each, in his way, beginning to feel at home.

William Howard Taft, President of the United States, had laid before the Senate a Treaty of Reciprocity with Canada. The support by some of the folks in the United States was much too enthusiastic. Speaker Champ Clark declared: "I am for it because I hope to see the day when the American flag will float over every square foot of the British North American posses-

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

sions clear to the North Pole." The Canadian press took immediate offence at this blunt statement, and President Taft was chagrined to have his treaty rejected by the Canadian Parliament.

The long debate in Parliament stirred news writers and editors to recall all they knew of Canadian geography and history as it related to the United States. Once there had been serious talk, fostered by England and the Hudson Bay Company, of maintaining a barrier of war-like tribes of Indians between the States and the Provinces! This project had long been discarded. In the War of 1812 there had been threats of invasion of Canada from the States. These threats were followed by vigorous thrusts by Perry on Lake Erie and Harrison at the Battle of the Thames. These victories were partly balanced by some American losses; but they seemed very important to the Western pioneers of that day. Zed boasted, "When I was a little shaver, I heard Uncle John Todd tell about Harrison and Perry. Uncle John had heard Henry Clay make a speech about them down at Lexington. Clay was braggin' that the Kentucky militia could whip all of Canada single handed, if Congress would only give us a chance." He added reflectively, "I reckon them old time fellers was feelin' their oats. Maybe they didn't know how big Canada really is."

Next some one dug up an account of the Bagot-Rush agreement, made between England and the United States when Madison was President. This pact provided that there should be no armaments between Canada and the United States except a single war vessel of not more than one hundred tons on Lake Champlain, another on Lake Ontario, and two more of similar size on the other Great Lakes. Madison acted promptly to carry out his part in this peaceful program, and so did Great Britain.

This experiment in international disarmament had gone

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

into effect, practically unheralded; but it had lasted for nearly a century and seemed certain to continue. Only two hundred miles of the boundary line had been fixed at the time of this pact; but the peaceful arrangement made it easy for joint commissions to adjust the rest of the four thousand miles from time to time. Future proposals for world disarmament might fail or succeed; but this agreement had enabled two great nations to develop side by side, with only iron posts at intervals to mark the Line!

Across this Line was already flowing a vast current of population, carrying with it modern ideas, scientific approach to problems and new inventions in all the fields of life; and most important of all, a common language with its literature and ideals firmly fixed in the hearts on both sides of the Line.

In the University of Wisconsin, Frederick Jackson Turner had been teaching history from a new viewpoint. He saw the vast Mississippi Valley as the unifying element of civilization and growth in the United States. It was the Mississippi Valley whose conquest and economic unity had bound us together as a nation, and had continued to hold us together through a terrible Civil War. What were these Saskatchewan wheat fields but a northern extension of the Mississippi Valley? Lakin and Dan were both interested in such historical studies.

All this newspaper talk had sifted through in part to lonely homesteaders, sitting by cheerful fires. After all, the brotherhood of man seemed to be a fairly practical thing in this new country. They were trying it here and it worked all right. Swedes, Scotch, German, English, Yankees, Southerners, they were all good neighbors here. Father remembered that Tennyson had written about "the Parliament of Men, the Federation of the World"; and that a much older poet had spoken of the time when the lion should lie down with the lamb.

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Dan liked to argue. "Do you think that Woodrow Wilson has any chance to beat Taft if they are both nominated for the coming election?" he asked Zed.

Zed snorted his disgust. "If the Democratic party puts up that dad-blamed school teacher for president, they deserve to get beaten," was his response.

Dan stuck to his argument. "Let me point out to you that Taft is likely to have to face a division of his party which may cause his defeat. Teddy Roosevelt has already declared that he feels like a Bull Moose. This leaves small doubt that he is getting ready to fight his former friend, Mr. Taft. I believe this will give Wilson a very good chance to carry the election, if he can get the nomination. Some of the rest of the school teachers will stand by him."

Such fireside arguments helped to pass the winter evenings. Father had always liked that wonderful eleventh chapter of Isaiah. He got out his Bible and read it to the boys: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Father closed the Bible. "Somewhere I read not long ago that an Italian inventor, I don't remember his name, is talking to people in distant places without the help of any wires. I can remember how astounded folks were at the telephone when it was first displayed at the World's Fair at Philadelphia in 1876. Then I can go on back to the time when I was only seven years old. I heard my Pappy read the story in our weekly newspaper about that miracle of wires which carried the first telegram; that exultant and thrilling cry, 'What hath God wrought?' Truly

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

the Knowledge of the Lord is covering the earth. If any single lifetime can stretch across these incredible miracles, what may the coming centuries bring?"

Uncle Sam had not claimed to be a lamb; but he had managed to lie down in peace with the British lion for nearly a hundred years, with nothing to separate them but a Line, and it an imaginary Line.

CHAPTER XI

The currents of life carried the members of the Brown-Trelawney family in various directions in the autumn of 1912. Father stayed on with his post office, patiently doing his own cooking and housework, planning a still bigger garden as the next spring came on. He had really succeeded this summer in raising some fine pumpkins and squash. Peas and lettuce and most green things did well in the long, hot days of the short season.

Zed found work on his own farm much less interesting than life on the Williams ranch. This old time settler looked with disfavor on wheat raising. "Let me tell you, Zed," he said to the younger man, "this is strictly a cattle country in my judgment. I certainly hate to see the land which has been my free range for years cut up into farms. Grasshoppers and the drought will drive you Yanks out in the long run."

"Maybe some of these things will get the best of us," said Zed. "Sometimes I think I was foolish to leave my nice Kentucky farm where I could raise everything from alfalfa to raspberries, and come up here to put all my cards on wheat growing. But I'll bet you won't get rid of these Scotch and English settlers in a hurry. They like it and they're here to stay."

Williams was stubborn. "I'm still going to keep my cattle. My son-in-law, Bubsy, will help look after them; and I can always use another man about the place if you'd like to help me. Times are so damn hard I can't pay you much, but you're always welcome to all you want to eat." He emphasized his

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

remarks with a stream of tobacco juice and profanity.

"Well," said Zed, "I do like it around here because nobody expects me to wash the gol-darned dishes or help take care of the babies."

Sue was coming more and more to realize that each of her three children had a personality of his own. Junior was now a husky lad of twelve with his own ideas of what was good for him. This was not especially new, Retta said, as she and Sue discussed the problem.

"I remember so well," Retta said, "when Junior was only three years old and you let me bring him home to visit his Grandfather and Grandmother on the farm. I never saw Father so upset as when Junior began to assert himself. All of us children had been brought up to obey promptly and without question. He just didn't know what to do with this grandson who had not been taught quite the same respect for his elders."

"Why, I taught him to mind," said Sue; "but I must admit that Zed's notion and mine of how to bring up a youngster never did agree. Zed was always quick to flare up and quick to forget."

"Yes, and you were very slow to flare up, and always explaining the reason for things to your children," commented Retta. "Maybe there is a middle ground. We felt we surely needed more than reason when he glared at all of us and said, 'I'm going to be bad'."

"Oh, the poor kid was only homesick and lonesome for his mother," was Sue's quick defense.

"We knew that, but we didn't know what to do about it when Junior began to show us how bad he could be. Even a baby can be very trying, but I had to laugh when he showed us that he really knew what was going on. I've told you before how Mother gave him a chicken bone with very little meat on it to keep him quiet. He chewed on the drumstick patiently for

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

a time, then said, 'I wish you folks kept a dog'."

Retta laughed and Sue joined her rather ruefully. Often enough she had learned how quickly children detect our motives. Yet how blind they sometimes are, too!

Years later in his young manhood, Junior had drawn far away from his mother's counsel and scorned her advice. He was working for himself away from home. It was a hard job, delivering truckloads of heavy casks for a chemical company. Like most young chaps he was too confident of his strength, and a cask slipped and caught him a heavy blow on his shoulder and neck. Soon intense pain came on. The firm he worked for sent him to a hospital, but their brief concern soon faded to neglect. Discouraged and alone he grew worse instead of better. When word came to his mother, her sudden and energetic help brought him the best of medical attention. His quick recovery and relief were mingled with amazement.

"Why, Mother," he said, "this must have cost you much more than you can afford. I didn't suppose anyone cared that much for me."

Sue, who would gladly have poured out life itself to save him, could hardly answer him. "Oh, Junior, don't you know that any mother never thinks about what she can afford when her child is in danger?"

Lakin and Dan were renting their land for one year to a German family, who had arrived too late in the season to find themselves satisfactory homesteads. Father rented his land to them for the next season, also. The boys were glad to sell their teams and turn over this rough labor to those more accustomed to it. They had proved that they could take it with the toughest and strongest; but pioneering did not seem to be the activity their college trained minds demanded.

Lakin bade goodbye to the tough little team of Western

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

broncos, that had been his special pride these three years. He liked to talk to them on the long, lonesome trips, and they acted as if they understood his language. He always talked very softly and earnestly to them when they had a particularly hard job ahead, and they never refused to try the tasks he called on them to perform. One day Zed and the bigger team with Dan driving had mired down crossing a deceptive mud hole. After sweating, lifting and much trouble they managed to pull their load through, and waited for Lakin to come up with his lighter team.

"Guess we'll have to hitch on and help you," called Zed. "That mud hole is worse than it looks. We got stuck there."

"Maybe I can make it," said Lakin. "I don't want to give up till I've had a try anyway. Just give me a little time. Come on you, Bob and Sam," he said to his little gray buckskins. "You've had a little rest now; let's show these fellers what we can do." He had already climbed down from his load, patted his team, readjusted their collars and rubbed their ears, talking softly.

"You're only about half as heavy as that big Prince and Queeny, but you never have gone back on me yet. Come on, there's a good feed of oats waiting." He climbed back on the load and clucked to the team to go ahead. Perhaps he profited by Dan's mistake; certainly the little broncs took him and his load across, Lakin talking gently to them all the time.

"Gosh, I never thought you could do it," said Zed admiringly. "No wonder you're a pretty good school teacher, if that's the way you talk to the boys and girls."

Lakin had acquired quite a bit of extra muscle since he came to Canada. His shoulders had broadened and his height was now about equal to Father's. Now he found it easy to swing the heavy harness to its high peg in the stable with one hand, a task which had taxed his strength and both hands when

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

he first tried it. He felt he had gained much besides a homestead.

He expected to teach in Montana. On his way south he stopped at a small, western hotel for dinner. When the cook called for them to "Come an' get it" the hotel owner looked over his crowd. "Just go on into the dining room, men," he called. "That big feller in the red sweater take the lead." Lakin looked around for the "big feller," and was surprised to find himself the only man wearing a red sweater.

Dan, who had never been so fond of teaching, found an unusual job that winter. A teachers' employment agency, to which he still belonged, wrote him regarding an opening which they said would pay better than teaching. They had been requested to find a financial agent and manager to travel in advance of a lecturer, who made a specialty of monologues drawn from the writings of Shakespeare with comments and information appropriate to his audiences. This J. Henderson Burns was a literary doctor of some reputation. He wanted his tours to be carefully planned in advance and well advertised. The unique entertainment he offered demanded careful promotion and stage settings. He was prepared to pay a small fixed salary in addition to travelling expenses, and an additional percentage of the gross receipts. He liked Dan's letter and wanted to meet him in a conference.

The offer appealed to Dan, who liked to plan such campaigns. He liked, too, the opportunity to brush against his fellow men. Dan was blessed with an engaging smile, almost always on exhibit, and a pleasant resonant voice. Men of all sorts were attracted by his great fund of information, ready command of English, and his apt illustrations and stories.

Dan found J. Henderson Burns very dignified but affable. It was evident that he really knew Shakespeare and how to present him forcefully to an audience. The only objection he

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

raised to giving Dan this job, was that this rough Canadian rancher did not show, on the surface, the polish he needed for an advance agent. However, Burns said that he felt sure these outside marks of hardship and native shyness could be easily smoothed away. That Dan had an unusual mind was quite apparent, he was willing to admit.

"I'm glad you do not judge wholly by outside appearances," said Dan. "My head may be a little larger than ordinary, but I think I can prove that it is not empty. My Father was fond of telling a story of what happened when I was four years old. Uncle Johnny Richards came out to the farm to visit my Mother. I was playing on the floor, and Uncle Johnny stared at me in some amazement. Finally he said, 'Come here, Dan, try my hat on.' I came to him and he carefully tried his hat on my head, then he called to Mother, 'Sarah, do you think this boy is all right?'"

Dan and the eminent doctor concluded a bargain with the stipulation that Dan should first show that he could accept criticism and profit by it.

"I'm very particular about the man who represents me before the public," said the doctor. "Little niceties of dress may make or mar our contacts with an exacting public. I perceive that your ranching experience has not left you much time for the proper attention to your personal appearance. We could soon correct that if you are willing to try."

Dan recognized the justice of this comment. It would afford him a chance to grow in a direction that life had not hitherto opened up to him. He had always been painfully conscious that there was room for improvement in the set of his tie, the cut of his hair, the fit of his clothing, and similar marks of the fastidious gentleman. He really longed for these things and was willing to try for them with the doctor to show him how. Dan was

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

finding this job exciting and profitable. He well knew that a good brain and an alert mind might win in the long run, but also that they could be greatly aided or hindered by the appearance of the man. He entered upon the contract assured that he would enjoy the change from roughing it in Canada.

While Dan was arranging this exciting change, Sue, who had taken her children to spend the winter with her sister, was finding the change from ranch life most agreeable. They were living comfortably in the city of Hamilton, which with Middletown to the north and the still bigger and more distant Dayton, comprise a vast industrial region tributary to Cincinnati.

The valley of the Big Miami in which Hamilton and Middletown lay, was as fine farm land as Ohio boasted, except perhaps the bottom lands along the Ohio River itself. These Ohio River bottom lands were often inundated by spring floods, which caused thousands of families great inconvenience, and occasionally forced them to move from their homes for a few weeks until the floods subsided.

The Big Miami River Valley had hitherto been practically free from flood troubles; but in March of 1913, after weeks of very unusual downpour, folks grew a little worried as the river surged bank full. Still, they had never had a flood; and they plodded through the rain that morning to their usual tasks. Nancy, riding to her school on the street car, hardly glanced at the river as the car passed over the bridge. From the end of the line she must walk a mile to the country school where she taught. Retta travelled about the same distance south of the city to her school. Sue sent her two older children to the grade school two blocks away, a part of the Hamilton city system.

Dan had come home the night before, to stay over the Easter vacation. He liked his job and was doing well at it. Not only was the travel pleasant to him, but he enjoyed quoting long

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

passages of Shakespeare. This morning he was having a great time with Mary, no longer a baby, but not old enough to go to school.

About ten o'clock, he decided to walk uptown. The exercise would do him good. But as he went along, and drew nearer the Court House, he was puzzled by excited groups on the street. Stopping to inquire, he was told a flood was coming. How bad a flood? No one seemed to know, but there were wild rumors that the river was out of its banks, and was cutting an entirely new channel across the heart of this industrial city. Hurrying on, he found water in the streets that had always seemed high and dry above the river. Anxious householders were distracted. Merchants too were at their wits' end. Water was rapidly rising on High Street, the very heart of the business section of the city. Factories and schools were closing down. Fifty thousand people had suddenly been trapped by the swiftly rising flood. The bridge had gone down. Already, communication between the two halves of the city was extremely difficult, separated as they were by this strange and raging Miami; a river usually so placid and friendly, now out of its banks, cutting through streets and alleys with the force and noise of artillery. Men stared at each other in amazement. Street cars had stopped running, traffic was at a standstill. No one knew what to do.

Get out, get the family to safety, leave your stores, banks, shops, restaurants. *Get out!* Police and government authorities seemed paralyzed. It certainly was terrifying to get off a street car, stand for a few minutes on the sidewalk, then see water climbing out of the street up the curb, to your very feet. Get out, but where to go? Panic grew as the day advanced. The most terrible thing was that no one could guess what was coming. One thing seemed certain; this mad river was cutting a

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

new channel for itself through the heart and life of a great city. While the midafternoon changed to darkness, raging water was slicing through homes like a great knife. Evidently the cities above Hamilton had also suffered. Houses went by with people on their roofs, calling and waving frantically for help. Drifting trees carried the bodies of living and dead who had sought refuge in them.

Dan had long since hurried home appalled by what he had seen. He was surprised to find that the end of the city where Sue and her sisters lived was untouched by the flood. It was apparent that this section of the city was higher than they had thought. Later it was shown that the river made most havoc along a prehistoric river bed.

Not only was the course of this disaster unpredictable, but the immensity and reach of it was hard to grasp by those who were caught in it. If one were not in the main path of the flood it was difficult to realize what was happening. Help began to come in from the outside world. Bread lines formed and in a few days the stricken city could try to take stock of all that had befallen it. Nancy had been stranded on her side of the river for a week, consumed with anxiety, but at last she was safely home. Retta, Sue and the children had been on the side of the city least affected by the flood.

A disaster like this has many angles; to some it meant loss of life or friends; to others great property damage. No harm came to Dan and his sisters except much worry and deep concern over the suffering around them. To Dan himself came unexpected happiness.

The worst of the flood had passed, and Dan was standing with Retta on the bank of the Miami, which at this southern part of the city had never left its old channel. They were a part of a group of neighbors who had gathered to watch the

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

wreckage of other homes still drifting down the stream, though the rain had ceased and March sunshine was bright.

"Hello, Bertha," Retta called in greeting to one of these neighbors who stood near them. "It looks like the worst of this is over. Aren't you glad we live in this end of town?" Hardly waiting for the obvious answer to this question, Retta turned to Dan. "You know Bertha, don't you, Dan? She comes to our church."

"Well, I haven't been in your church very often, but I am sure we have met somewhere," answered Dan, who had already drawn near to this young woman with her intelligent face and very attractive figure. She was close to Dan's age and had that unusual charm that indicates strong vitality. "Are you one of the office workers who have been drowned out of their jobs by this disaster?" he inquired.

"No, I'm a teacher," laughed Bertha and it was evident she laughed easily. "But I have a sister who stayed on her job in an office until she had to be carried to a place of safety."

"Mr. Shakespeare has been proved right again," said Dan gallantly. "You know he said, 'There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at its flood leads on to fortune.' I hope the young man who carried your sister to safety, realizes his good fortune."

"Perhaps he will," said Bertha. "But very few of you men do. I suppose there will be some good come out of all this terrible hardship and suffering."

Dan added some comment and the talk drifted to other phases of the catastrophe they were witnessing. Each had some incident to relate of the tragedy which had come so close without striking them. Have you seen the house on Tenth Street which was sliced down lengthwise by the flood, leaving the dining table still set for the evening meal? Yesterday, standing

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

right here I saw a stable float past with a rooster crowing from its ridgepole. By such impersonal approaches these two, who but a few minutes ago had been strangers to each other explored gently the edges of each other's personality.

Retta was by nature a match-maker; so she invited Bertha home with them for supper. After the meal Dan took Bertha to her home and came back with a cheerful look upon his face. He picked Mary up and swung her to the ceiling. "Do you ever dream, Mary?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mary, "I dreamed last night. I told Mother about my dream." "What was your dream about, Mary?" "I dreamed about a bear." "What about the bear?" "Oh, just a bear!" said Mary.

Sue said thoughtfully to Retta, "Didn't Dan have a very bitter experience with that girl you call Jessie, soon after I was married?"

"Bitter is hardly a strong enough word," answered Retta. "I never knew a nice boy to get such a raw deal. She straight out jilted him, after they had been engaged for more than six months; just because she found another man who had more money. Dan had not gone to college then. He was teaching school at thirty-five dollars a month for six months. He was only nineteen and Father offered him half of all the corn and tobacco he could raise in the summer time on that old farm. That summer Dan almost worked his heart out, and we had the driest summer we ever had."

"That must have been the next year or two after I was married," said Sue. "I heard something of the story, but I was having so much trouble of my own with Zed's mother at that time, that I don't recall much about it."

Retta said: "We were awfully sorry for Dan, but proud, too, of the way he took the blow. He left the farm, worked his way

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

through college, and kept a smiling face. Now he is on his way to own a really good farm, three hundred and twenty acres of good, wheat land. Six months more of residence and his title will be clear. Now, if another girl is smiling on him, I guess he will feel that he must go slow."

Sue had a feeling that life had trapped her. Junior was ready for high-school, and her girls must have their chance. Equally set was her purpose to hold fast to their Canadian land. If she did that the children might have not only an education, but also reasonable economic security with it. In the third place, she felt her responsibility to stand by Father in his pioneering. After all, her persuasion had much to do with his going.

One day Retta said to her, "I envy you, Sue; you have such lovely children."

"Yes," chimed in Nancy. "Sometimes it seems you do not appreciate the chance to raise such a nice family."

"Chance of raising a family," said Sue a little bitterly; "better say, load of raising a family, with the daddy pulling the wrong way. Zed doesn't beat me, but sometimes I think I could stand that better than to have him pull against me. You know he fights against religious training in the home, and laughs when Junior imitates any of his bad habits. A man thirteen years older than myself, and out of touch with my ideals, is not my notion of a help-meet."

"Well, why did you take him then? Why didn't you take one of your other beaux, Frank or Charley? They were young and liked you well enough."

"You know why I took him," retorted Sue. "The family were already calling me an old maid; I wanted to escape the disgrace. Zed had enough money to get married on, but my other beaux didn't. Zed made me plenty of good promises."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

"Well, you've still got him," said Nancy, "he doesn't get drunk or do anything dreadful. Better make the most of him."

"Yes," Retta agreed. "I like Zed. He looks you straight in the eye and never dodges his share of the fight. He has done many nice things for us, and I still think you're lucky."

Sue finished this dialogue with decision: "Lucky or not, I have to shoulder the load of seeing that these children grow up decent and educated. I'm staying on here another year in Hamilton, to start Junior in High School, and my baby in the first grade. Zed will have to look out for himself another year, and Father, too."

Zed and Father found life dull with all their women folks gone back to Ohio. The inactivity of the long winters was a positive curse to some ranchers. Whiskey drinking seemed to them the only way to amuse themselves. Father knew that such a course could only mean shipwreck for himself. When he was a young man, the whiskey jug had been almost as common as the barrel of apple cider that nearly every farmer kept at hand. Father was very fond of the taste of whiskey; but seeing men around him whose lives had been ruined by drinking, he decided on total abstinence for himself as the only way to be safe. Zed too, was shy of drink, having seen its terrible grip on an older brother. So neither man fell into this pit.

When the boys had first come to Canada, wild duck and prairie chicken had been rather plentiful and had made welcome additions to the family diet. With many more settlers coming in, game grew scarce. After a day of unsuccessful hunting in those first years, Dan remarked to Lakin about the scarcity of animal life.

"Do you remember a book Father once brought home from the Ohio School Library called 'The Young Voyageurs' or something like that? It was the story of three or four young

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

chaps who hiked across Northwestern Canada on business connected with the Hudson Bay Company. Well, it gave a scientific description of the various forms of animal life these fellows found that winter on these same Great Plains. Nearly every chapter had several pages full of Latin names, habitat and habits of the field mice or the Great Horned Owl that fed on them, or a similar description of some other animal. I always skipped those pages and hurried on to the adventure part. Maybe we should have paid attention and learned how to find these living things in the snow."

"Jack rabbits come up in the bright moonlight on these winter nights close enough for me to shoot them from the shack door," answered Lakin. "I don't think I care for any stews made from the Great Horned Owl or from field mice either." Like most American boys, hunting was less to them a matter of sport than of getting food.

When Zed complained of the monotony of life in Canada, Father made the suggestion: "Why don't you go hunting with some of these young fellers, Zed. A couple of the boys in the post office yesterday were saying that up north there is pretty good hunting this year. Some venison would sure go well with our corn meal mush."

The idea sounded good to Zed and he acted on it. He returned in due time with his venison; but he did not seem to be very enthusiastic about hunting trips. He was still pretty much of a Kentuckian, and some of the arguments with these ranchers lately come from the old world grew furious. Kentucky politics, English conservatism and a Saskatchewan blizzard had not mixed too well, it seemed.

Occasional letters from his scattered children only seemed to make Father's loneliness more vivid. Lakin had written him about his school work in Montana, and Retta had sent him

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

thrilling stories of the flood that had devastated Hamilton. Father could picture the long miles between him and Ohio; but still longer, seemed to stretch back in memory, the years between him and his children. Most of the time he wandered alone in these fields of the far Past.

Dan had been with him part of the time, but only to stay the six months required by law. Then he was off to teach, or to promote this latest foolishness, the study of Shakespeare. What had he heard Dan muttering in his sleep one night recently? "Lady, I swear by yonder blessed moon, I swear . . ." Wonder what lady he was dreaming about? As a boy Dan had been much given to talking in his sleep. Father remembered one winter when the boy was about fourteen and he and Dan had had quite a bout playing checkers. Father had been roused wide awake in the middle of the night by Dan walking into the bed room in his night shirt. "Father, can I take that move over?" he inquired very politely. Father, recalling these old memories, often talked to himself and dreamed too, of days before the Civil War, when he had courted and won beautiful Sallie, Dan's mother.

Just before Dan had completed his final six months of residence, one experience had struck both men with stark reality. It was Sunday evening and Zed was over at the Williams' ranch. Intense cold and darkness shut these two lonesome men in Father's shack. "Look, Pappy," cried Dan. "Here's a can of salmon that looks lonely as we do. Let's have a treat; a Sunday evening supper not made of mush and milk. Don't know how we came to overlook this can so long." It tasted fine; but some hidden ptomaine poison must have lurked in it. Soon Dan was rolling and twisting on the floor of the shack in pain uncontrollable. Father, too, was ill; but he had not eaten so heartily as Dan. The nearest doctor was fifty miles away.

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

Father got out a lantern and lighted it with shaking hands.
“I’m going over to Wards for help. They are the best neighbors we have.”

“But they are more than a mile away. You’ll never make it in the deep snow, and sick yourself,” groaned Dan.

“I’ll make it, if I have to crawl on my hands and knees, you must have help,” said Father.

“And I’ll die while you’re gone, die here all by myself. Let’s wait a few minutes,” begged Dan.

Father consented to wait five minutes. The pauses between spasms grew longer gradually, and Dan was again in control of himself. It was a terrible experience, though the effects seemed to pass in a few days.

Dan was soon headed south again to work another season with J. Henderson Burns; but Father thought over this incident with much misgiving. Alone except when Zed spent a few hours with him, or when some rancher came in for his mail, doubts assailed him. If he had not been so eager to pay off his debts, perhaps Dan would have given up his scheme and none of them would have come to Canada. They all had been running such risks! Years of hardship, so many enemies threatening every crop, Zed and Sue with family ties near breaking, now Dan so close to death, were all these worth-while? He had always been so confident of his strength, so sure in his own decisions. Was it all to end in failure?

Through the winter darkness King Cold stared at him. Howling wind, drifting snows, frozen fields, all bowed down in fulsome worship of Cold — their King. Must he and his family too fall upon their knees before the Frost King?

Then the steadfastness built up through a long lifetime renewed itself as he read his Bible. The law required him to live on his land only one more winter. In 1915 his six years

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

would end. He could prove up his title in full; house built on his homestead and lived in; the required number of acres plowed and in crop. Gratefully he acknowledged the strength given him to hold fast to the accomplishment of his purpose. He still was strong, but when he died this land would pay all his debts and even the interest on them. He could be free at last from this heavy burden which he had carried for thirty long years. Slowly his purpose renewed its shape. He would pay his debts and spend his remaining days in California, land of fruit and sunshine.

What was it Lakin had said to him laughingly, when he last bade him goodbye? "See you in California, Pappy." It had been a joke between them; but sometimes, jokes have an uncanny way of coming true.

CHAPTER XII

The summer of 1914 saw war clouds hovering over Europe. Surely, men have too much sense in these days to fight. If they fight, they'll need wheat. If they fight, they will need men. Do you think Canada will go to war if England does? Will Woodrow Wilson, the school teacher President of the United States, throw his influence toward war or peace? Suddenly these questions were answered. The great German war machine was thundering into Belgium. England was calling for wheat. Canadian boys and men were volunteering. Wilson was begging the United States to remain neutral.

Father could hardly believe the war news. He said to Zed: "What a pity Teddy is not President now, with his big stick. Those Germans would have listened to him."

Zed and Father never seemed able to discuss things without soon starting some spark to flying. "Don't you believe it," was Zed's answer. "The Germans are set to smash England; and smash her they will, at the rate they are going. I have never dodged a fight, but I sure hate to see this one coming. Still, I can see one good thing about it. Armies have to eat, and you will see wheat prices going up and up. Now's the time to double the wheat crop."

"I know armies have to be fed," said Father; "but I don't want to get rich by the help of any war. I saw enough of that in our Civil War. Lincoln had to fight the profiteers as well as the South, and I think they were harder to lick than the Rebels."

"Don't call us Rebels," spoke up Zed, "or I will be giving

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

you a sample of the Rebel yell. My folks fought on that side, but I am as good a citizen of these United States as any one now." Zed seemed to forget that he was now a citizen of Canada.

Father dropped the conversation. No use stirring Zed up with these dead and gone issues. He had many memories of those old Civil War days. He might have related how Morgan, the Rebel cavalry leader, suddenly crossing the Ohio, had marched into the county where he had been living; how hastily the Stars and Stripes had been pulled down from homes and stores. With his usual stubbornness and disregard of what the neighbors wanted, Father did not pull his down. Neighbors had come to him, demanding that the flag still flying over Brown's grocery store should come down, lest Morgan burn all the town. He had steadily refused. A few days later, when Morgan had turned northeast toward a new objective, he had shouldered a gun and marched away to drive the Rebels back. Soon Morgan had been captured and he had been able to return to his distressed young bride and his baby girl. It would have sounded to Zed like boasting to recall these things, and Father was no boaster.

So many new settlers were coming into the post-office to get their mail, that he found it hard to remember their names and keep the mail moving in its due course. Many of these strangers were coming from far parts of Europe, over which counter marching armies had been struggling and dying for centuries. Had these immigrants sensed the oncoming warfare, tasted the taint of coming battle and unburied dead, and hurried to get out to this clean, new land?

Zed had been spending much of his time at the Williams ranch. He had grown very fond of "Bubsy" Reed. This was the fantastic name for the fat man who was Williams' son-in-law. He was nearly as old as his own father-in-law and weighed

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

nearly twice as much as Zed did. Bubsy seemed to have a strange hold over Zed, who worked for him with small thought of pay. There seemed to be a demand in Zed's life for this sort of society. Perhaps he wanted to get away from the reproach of his own unbroken acres. True, Bubsy had talked loosely of letting Zed take his wages in some of the live stock which overran his father-in-law's ranch. So far there had been no settlement.

The spring of 1914 brought Father a surprising letter from Dan. His siege had been successful. He would be married in June, and bring his bride on immediately to Canada. It had not been easy to persuade Bertha to quit teaching, leave her two sisters and the comforts of her Ohio home, and accept the hardships of a pioneer life. It seemed that Dan must have doubled his persuasive powers by his experience in selling Shakespeare through the middle West, and then turned all this power on Bertha. Perhaps the girl saw, as he did, that a wheat farm in wartime meant far more economic security than school teaching. Perhaps, it is true after all, that "love makes the world go round." Dan was closing his contract with J. Henderson Burns. The three months interim between this and his marriage was filled. He was accepting a teaching post in the state of Idaho, to complete the unfinished job of a school principal who had died.

At about the same time Sue had written that she had decided to leave Junior with his aunt to go forward with his high school work, and she would bring her two girls back to Canada. They ought to be able to do very well for a few years in the new school, now organized in easy walking distance from their homestead. Perhaps she and Zed could get all their land broken and seeded. Wheat prices had started to climb. Retta and Nancy would not be coming up this summer, they thought.

It had taken all the resolution Sue could muster to return

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

from Ohio to the Canadian life for herself and her girls. Everything within her cried out for the comfort of living in a modern home; more especially, that her children should have these privileges and grow accustomed to the American way of life.

But as they rode out on the new railroad, running south from Moose Jaw to within nine miles of their homestead, something of the tang and zest of pioneer living thrilled her. How clean the prairie seemed! Clean, clean, came the word from the wonderfully blue sky with its masses of white cloud. Clean, clean, answered the billowy fields of wheat and the summer air that swept over them. She remembered how well her children had kept in this clean air, and thought that physical health was, after all, the first great lesson of life. Sound bodies were needed for sound minds; the niceties of life could come later. Again she renewed her purpose, to find in the wealth of this soil, economic security for her family.

Zed seemed awfully glad to see them. Like most fathers, he thought his little girls were real treasures, especially when he did not see too much of them. Sue could not forget how bitter he had been during their first years in Canada. When she had asked him what were the good things in this new land, he had replied: "I can't see anything good in it but the oats. They are better than any we could raise in Kentucky." But now he seemed much more content.

"I'm learning how to break this land," he boasted. "Yesterday with four horses I broke an acre and a half of as good land as you ever saw. Not quite so easy as breaking meadow land back home but I know a little better how to handle this prairie sod now."

"Yes, but whose land was it? Who did you do all this plowing for?" asked Sue.

Zed's face fell as he replied slowly, "That's a mystery. If I

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

told you everything I know, you'd know as much as I do."

"It's no secret," said Sue. "Everybody knows you will work your head off for Bubsy Reed, for some strange reason. I don't know what it is, unless he has hypnotized you. I wish I knew how to do that. I suppose his wife doesn't scold you; but she is only twenty-two now, about the same age I was when I married you. Maybe she won't be so good-natured in a few more years."

Zed angrily disclaimed any interest in Bubsy's wife, and still more hotly denied that he was under Bubsy's thumb. "Well," retorted Sue, "see if you can't trade him all that work you've been doing for a good young team. Surely he owes you that much for a winter's work."

She was surprised when Zed was able to do this. In the two years they had been separated, bitter thoughts had driven much of the affection she had once felt for this husband, so much older than herself, out of her heart. Looking back, she realized that the first seeds of this bitterness had been sown in the very beginning of their married life, when Zed had taken her to the old brick house in Kentucky to live with his mother. This cantankerous old lady had been very hard to get along with. It happened that she had not lived long after Zed's wedding; but her vitriolic tongue had left deep scars in the mind of this daughter-in-law who hated, above all things, fighting and discord.

Zed must have gotten his love of fighting from his mother. Certainly he had not acquired from her that good training and Christian influence which had done so much to smooth the rough places in Sue's home. It is true her father and mother had had their differences; but they had settled them mostly when their children were not at hand. Zed snapped out sharp comments to his children and did not seem to mind when they replied in kind. This was a constant irritation to Sue. "Keep your meddling hands off my violin, Beth. It's the only damn

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

thing left from Kentucky that I care anything about. Lick the candy off your sticky hands, or I'll lick you. I'm not used to meddling brats around," he shouted at his older daughter.

"Oh, I suppose Bubsy's brats aren't meddlesome," said Beth pertly. "Why don't you take your precious violin down there, and let them play on it."

Sue could not tolerate this sort of thing. "Don't speak so to your father, Beth. Try to do as he says, and don't talk back."

Sue had come back to the homestead thinking she would speak firmly to Zed about their differences. She hated this pulling in opposite directions. Let him go his way, and she would keep the children and try to bring them up her way. Maybe separation was better than so much irritation. Still, she remembered that old adage, "Go slow over the rough places." She would talk this out with Father first.

Father listened, but shook his head. How white that head was getting these last few years! And he was not quite as straight as he had always been. "I'll tell you Sue, something I learned in my own life. We are all apt to think our way is the right way. Your mother and I did not always see things alike. I guess I was hardheaded about most things; I remember my sisters and brothers thought so. They are all gone now but your Aunt Sis and once I made her terribly mad.

"I was sixteen, almost as big and strong as I am now, and was whitewashing our woodshed. Sis was about eleven years old and running around bare legged. She said something, I forget what, that made me angry, and I grabbed her and whitewashed her legs. I thought she would explode, and Mother gave me a good scolding."

"Your mother should have switched you for that, even though you thought yourself a big boy," said Sue.

"My mother never struck me after I was thirteen. She tried

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

to one day but I caught her hands and held them. She began to cry and cried so long and hard that Pappy begged me to tell her I was sorry. I guess I did, but she never tried to strike me again. No, Sue, it does not pay to be sure that your way is right all the time. That was my great fault in my youth and all through my life."

He continued; "I remember when I had my financial troubles, your mother kept scolding and nagging me till I thought I could not stand it. One night after I had been hounded most of the day by some of my most bitter creditors, she talked far into the night about how dreadful it was to have this happen to her and to her children. Finally I could stand it no longer. I told her I was leaving in the morning; she could have the children and what was left of the property and I would start life anew. You were too little to know much about this; but the older children cried, and begged me to stay, and your mother seemed heart-broken. I remembered my promise to her, 'until death do us part', and set my teeth to stick it out. I'm glad I did. A broken family is a dreadful thing."

Sue had always listened when Father spoke. Now the wisdom of the ages seemed to flow from him into her heart. She would hold fast to Zed. Never should her children remind her that she had been to blame for broken family ties. She would be like this vast, level prairie, now thickly dotted with new homes, holding them together into one community. She would help draw the community together around a schoolhouse and a church, and help hold it together with neighborly kindness; but first, she must try her best to hold her own family together.

Such equipment as Zed had brought from Kentucky was not very suitable for prairie farming. Most of it had been pretty well worn out. Zed found it discouraging to work with the old binder which had served well enough on the Kentucky farm.

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Some of his neighbors were using two binders pulled by a tractor, and some were beginning to harvest with a combine which headed the wheat and thrashed it. A combine could cut a swath as wide as five or six binders. Some neighbors were plowing with tractors, and using big discs to cut and stir their summer fallow. All sorts of modern tools were needed for dry farming and for such big fields. Sue realized that these were underlying reasons why so small a part of the Trelawney land had been broken, though wheat was more and more demanded by the armies of Europe.

After studying this problem, Sue said to Zed: "Let's mortgage our land and get the whole farm broken and put in crops. We will get what new equipment is necessary, and try to make ourselves some money while we do our share of the feeding of Europe."

Zed's answer was prompt: "This seems to me a move in the right direction. I know that your whole family dread going into debt, since Dad's unpaid debts have been such a burden to him all these many years. But if we don't take the risk now, this opportunity will pass us by. Remember, they say that opportunity knocks but once!" So they went into Moose Jaw, saw a banker and made the necessary loan. They both agreed that only the most essential expense should be incurred, and the loan repaid as soon as possible.

The difficulty was to decide what were essential expenditures. Zed was so easy going that he was ready to loan some of this hard gotten cash to Bubsy Reed. Sue protested, and in like fashion put her foot down against trivial expenditures of every sort. There were plenty of things to spend money for. The automobile was no longer an untried dream. Many of the settlers were buying shiny new cars on time payments, and riding in style over these unpaved prairie roads, which soon proved

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

hard on the shine. Meanwhile, the Trelawney family traveled in the big jolt wagon; or in a 'stone boat'. Stone boat was the rancher's name for the big, heavy sleds used for most of the hauling in winter, or when the ground was very muddy.

Sue had steadily taken a part in promoting a Sunday School, meeting now in the newly finished school building. Here they also held church services, whenever a passing preacher or missionary could be found to give them such help. Sue had to swallow her pride on such occasions; it was not easy to bring her children and herself to these Sunday services, riding on the despised 'stone boat'. Sometimes she heard, or thought she heard, the least pious of the congregation jeering, "The meeting will begin now; the Trelawney stone boat has come."

In spite of all this, Sue knew she was gaining the respect and affection of her neighbors. It was going to be a great comfort to her to have Dan and his new wife so close. They had arrived in June, calling this trip to Canada their honeymoon. Bertha had taken hold of this pioneer life with enthusiasm and energy. It was nice to have this refined and good-natured young person for their nearest neighbor. Already they had had a lot of fun. It was fun to help this bride transform her trousseau into a ranching outfit. Bertha had been married in a traveling dress of dark blue covert cloth. She packed it away in the bottom of her big trunk, patting it affectionately and saying; "Lie there, little dress, and stay smooth and straight. I may need you on my second honeymoon."

"Hey! who's going to take you on that trip?" shouted Dan gaily. "Isn't one honeymoon enough?"

"Oh, no. I enjoy them so that I expect you to take me on several more. It is such fun to see you write 'Mrs. Brown' on the hotel register," she replied.

"I don't write Mrs. Brown. I write Mrs. Daniel X. Brown.

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

There are too many Browns to take a chance of some other Mr. Brown adopting you"; and Dan suited the speech to action appropriate for a bridegroom.

It was fun to load a big wagon with clean new hay from the slough, a picnic lunch, themselves, the children and Sue, and drive to the Lake of the Rivers where wild gooseberries and currants grew plentifully in the hot summer weather. Sue knew how good the jelly made from this wild fruit would taste in winter.

They had taken another trip to a smaller lake, a few miles away, for wading and swimming. This little lake was unique; its waters carried a strong percentage of Epsom salts. Bathing here was very refreshing, and the children were delighted with a new aunt who could find time to play with them.

Dan had always been jolly and full of fun, and Sue remembered how much pleasure she had found in play as a child. Playing "Andy Over" over the roof of the old, red school house in Ohio had been fun. "Oh, Mamma, let's play it here; our shack will do as well as a schoolhouse," cried Mary; and it really did. The long summer twilights were dandy for a romping game of "I Spy." It was quite surprising how much fun a few children and some older folks, who wanted to act like children, could have with these age-old games. Sue regretted that Junior was not at home this summer.

The crop this season was good. It was much easier to haul to the new branch railroad than it had been to drive the long miles into Moose Jaw. There were wheat elevators, too, so that a farmer no longer had to unload by hand, but simply drove up an inclined ramp and dumped his whole wagonload. With the rush of a big harvest, Sue found it quite easy to drive one of the big wheat wagons herself, while Zed drove another, to the elevators. It was a real pleasure to watch the stream of

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

golden wheat start on its long way to feed the marching armies of the world. It certainly added much to the pleasure to know that they were getting a price for it that would do much to clean up the debts they had incurred.

Thrashing time meant much neighborhood cooperation. To get the heavy wheat bundles delivered to the machine as fast as they could be handled by the thrashing crew, and to get the grain away as fast as it poured out of the machine, called for a good many men so the neighbors exchanged help and teams, and the women folks often came in to assist in feeding the hungry crew.

Many of the neighboring homesteads were occupied by bachelors. If lucky, some sister or cousin might come to cook for them. The three McFarland boys lived close to the Browns but had no cook. One day Herb McFarland came to Sue with a strange request. "Thrashers are coming; could you come over and get a dinner for them? It would be a mercy, ma'am, if you could help us out."

To get a meal for ten or a dozen hungry men in a strange house and on short notice seemed fantastically impossible. Herb was quite distressed at Sue's hesitation. He fell back on his broad Scotch. "As sure as deith, a' dinna ken whaur tae luik if ye canna come."

Sue left her girls with brief instructions to Beth to take care of Mary, and went with him. Herb built the fire, carried some water, and left her to finish the job while he hurried out to take his place with the thrashers. The unwashed breakfast dishes were on the table. There were potatoes and a big bowl of blueberries, plenty of eggs and milk. There were a few chunks of beef still useful, left from a larger piece from which the boys had used the best. Putting on the meat and potatoes for a stew, Sue washed the dishes and set the table. There was plenty of

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

flour for biscuits. She made a custard and stewed the blueberries. She had brought with her a big jar of her own jelly. When the men came in to dinner, dinner was ready. They ate heartily. "Tis noo butter," grumbled the big Scotchman, who had been given the head of the table. Sue felt like answering him with a hearty slap. Neither had she found butter, nor many other things she had wished for.

For herself, Sue did not greatly mind the rough incidents and manners, to say nothing of rough language, which constituted so much of this pioneer life. But for her growing and impressionable girls, she had a deep concern. Eleven year old Beth, with a tint of red in her hair, her blue eyes so like her Father's had come to feel very much at home with a thrashing crew or any other group of men. For that matter, both her girls had found in this prairie country a roistering, physical vitality which amused and pleased these lonesome settlers.

One Sunday a little later in the autumn, Beth tried her hand at an apple pie, under her mother's direction. Bill and Jack Young, lately come from Yorkshire, dropped in for a Sunday afternoon chat. They were big men and spruced up in their best clothes. Their Yorkshire brogue was hard to follow. To help entertain, Beth passed the pie she had been saving for the family supper. Her mother, busy at another task, failed to notice that the pie was being served from the tin on which it had been baked. The only serving plates suggested were the big hands of the visitors. The young cook had made it pretty juicy and the ranchers found it hard to manage. Beth thought it all a joke to see them dripping pie juice. This was more than the younger man could bear; suddenly he flung a handful of pie at the laughing face of the girl. Beth dodged, the pie struck the wall, and silence fell like a curtain. Promptly Sue scolded Beth for serving pie without plates while the older brother

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

tried to help clean up the mess.

Such incidents seemed spice to the youngsters, and they were growing so fast! Only a few days before she had heard her youngest child, who still seemed to Sue her baby, saying as she watched a big rancher drive past their house with his good-looking team: "When I grow up, I'm going to marry Big Bob McFarland. I think he'll let me drive his horses."

Weaving the warp and woof of the threads of a raw community into the pattern of civilized life, was the hardest work Sue had ever tried. Father had helped her over many rough places; but now he seemed headed for California. Sue knew she would sorely miss Father's strength and quiet assurance.

CHAPTER XIII

After finishing nine months of teaching in Montana, Lakin found a vacation job, driving a coach for a travel company through Yellowstone Park. When this brief but interesting experience came to an end, he took up teaching again, this time in a little city north of Spokane, Washington.

He had been elected principal of this consolidated school which served the small suburban city and the farming district adjoining. It was the best teaching position he had ever held and he was quite proud of his responsibility in this modern school and growing community.

He wrote to Dan: "I'm putting in double time here; besides my school, I have a half interest in a feed store where I work after school hours. My partner and I are doing very well. We sell lots of oats, hay and potatoes and carry staple groceries. We are handy to the railroad yards on one side and on the other are surrounded by truck farmers who feed Spokane. I bought a carload of spuds yesterday and resold them the same day at a good profit. Spokane is a place you ought to see. I'm in love with it. Though it is only a few years older than I am, it is sure a lot bigger."

There followed two paragraphs dilating upon the wonderful location of the city, at first called "Spokane Falls." The sudden drop in the Spokane River furnished power for its mills and factories. Now it was the center of a garden and fruit country. It lay near the vast wheat fields of eastern Washington, and the inexhaustible pine forests of northern Idaho. Here also lay

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

the Coeur d'Alene Mountains with the biggest lead and silver mines in the world.

Spokane, with its lovely homes and parks, its converging railroads, its equable climate, its recreation facilities in nearby lakes and mountains, the heart of a vast industrial region already famous as the Inland Empire of America, what a future must lie ahead of it!

Dan reading the letter to the assembled family, grinned at Father. "Gee, Pappy, Lakin must be more in love with Spokane than he ever was with a girl. I guess it's up to us to raise more carloads of oats than he can sell. Maybe you'll want to spend a while there. It is not so far as California from the rest of the family."

Father grinned too. "Looks like if this family continues to stick together, it may turn out to be an Artful Dodger of a family; from Ohio and Kentucky to Canada, back to Hamilton, to Canada, then to Spokane or California. Well, I hope we won't do our dodging for the same reason that the Artful Dodger did his in Oliver Twist."

This sounded like old times. Father had read most of Dickens' stories to us when we were small. He had often played a game with us, when for weeks at a time, we referred to ourselves each as some famous person in Dickens' tales. Father would be the Sea Captain in *Dombey and Son*, with his constant admonition, "When found, make a note of," or Old Joey Bagstock in the same story; "He's tough, ma'am, tough is J. B.; tough and devilish sly." Retta or Dan would pretend to be Little Joe of *Bleak House* forever moving on; or the Fat Boy of the *Pickwick Papers* always needing to be prodded into wakefulness.

Bertha found it rather perplexing to think of the entire family following Lakin on a jump to Spokane. "Looks to me like we'll be anchored here for some time to come."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

"Don't take me too seriously," said Father. "I often use words in their Pickwickian sense, I merely meant that in view of our past performances, we need not be surprised to find Nancy joining Lakin soon in Spokane; and maybe I will make that my next stopping place. It looks good from Lakin's letter."

Then he added more seriously: "Once I heard a sermon with a parable in it showing how strong a pull one member may exert on a whole family."

"Tell us the parable, Father," said Sue.

"A farmer was having trouble driving his flock of sheep from the near-by fold to a distant pasture. A neighbor who had been a shepherd in the highlands came along and said: 'Don't try to drive them. I'll show you the easy way.' He picked up a lamb in his arms and walked confidently ahead to the distant pasture. The mother ewe followed her lamb and soon the whole flock were safe in green pastures." And Father added, "I thought it a very comforting sermon."

The rest agreed, and were really not much surprised to hear in a few days from Nancy that she had concluded to join Lakin in Spokane. Nancy was by instinct a home-maker. Before she began to teach, she had struggled hard to make the old farmhouse a comfortable home. What a battle she had waged to keep out flies, to have beautiful shades and curtains at the windows, to have meals served tastefully! It was a real battle, because farm drudgery had made most of us careless about the niceties of life, and because there was little money for them. But Nancy spent her own money and never gave up.

When Mother died, she cried out: "Now, we won't have any home. Our home is broken up." Then she had gone bravely to work to hold the home together. She was still hoping, trying and working to that purpose. She had done a twofold job trying to keep the home in Ohio and helping to keep one in

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Canada in the summer. Now that Dan was married, an enthusiastic letter to her from Lakin praising Spokane, had been enough to start her on a new plan.



Why not join Lakin in Spokane and try once more to establish a home? It should not be difficult to sell her Hamilton property for enough to do this; and it should be as easy to teach in that section as in Ohio. She acted promptly. She found Spokane as enticing as Lakin had said. It was such a sunshiny city with its beautiful parks, its colorful, fruit-laden markets, its fine homes, and schools and stores. Lakin helped her find a modest home, and soon she was established for her experiment.

Meanwhile, Father had completed the six years of residence

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

required by Canadian law to give him a clear title to both home-
stead and preemption. Dan would take care of his three hundred
and twenty acres of wheat land for him, and he felt free to go
south and get out and away from the steady cold.

He stopped in Spokane to visit with Lakin and Nancy. The city attracted him as much as it had them. This might be a very good compromise between Canada and California, for a time at least. Father, walking the streets of the little city where Nancy had set up her home, met an old friend from Ohio, a blind man, and an old neighbor. They had quite a reunion. Mr. Buckthorn assured him that this was God's country. No need to hurry on to California; better see the Evergreen State first, with all its wonders and opportunities. Father listened to this burst of Western tall talk and wondered. Was it Spokane's attractiveness, family loyalty, or destiny that seemed to be drawing them toward it? Maybe he should wait and see; while he waited, Nancy wrote to Retta and urged her to join them there as soon as she could make it convenient.

Dan and his new wife were honey-mooning in his shack in Canada. Being very much in love, they thought they had all they needed in that bright summer to keep them happy. Maybe kisses are a natural antiseptic for mosquito bites; certainly most of the worries of pioneer life passed them by. Sue and her girls helped Bertha adapt herself to a new type of housekeeping, and did much to make her feel at home.

But Dan knew that hardships would really begin with the coming of autumn rains. There was not much he could do on the ranch through the long winter; but there were plenty of jobs he could find if he were further south and in some city. Such enthusiastic letters had been coming from Spokane, endorsed by Lakin, Father and Nancy, that they decided to go there and take a small apartment. They, too, were charmed

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

with the city; and Dan soon located a job with a big lumber company.

Nancy was teaching again in a county school near Spokane. She often spent the week-end with Bertha and Dan in their tiny apartment. It was not long before they confided to her that a baby was coming and that this had been their chief reason for coming to Spokane. As the time approached they selected their doctor and hospital.

The impending ordeal slipped upon them sooner than they expected, and with an added twist for which they were utterly unprepared. Nancy came to the apartment one blustery Friday evening in March to find Bertha alone and weeping wretchedly.

"Why, what on earth is the matter? Where's Dan?" asked Nancy.

"Dan's in the hospital," Bertha said.

"In the hospital? What is the matter with Dan? Why should he go to the hospital?" Nancy cried in quick alarm.

"He had a sudden attack of appendicitis," wailed Bertha, "and I couldn't stay with him. They wouldn't even let me go to the hospital with him, and my doctor tells me he thinks he will operate on him tonight." Her tears flowed more and more freely as she talked.

They prepared to get a night's rest, but soon they knew that Bertha's time was upon her. They called in the middle-aged neighbor woman who had promised to help in this emergency. In spite of the fact that she claimed to have had experience as a practical nurse, she proved of little help. She walked the floor, wringing her hands and crying, "What shall we do?" until Nancy lost her temper.

"Just go home," she snapped, "and get on the phone, and see if you can hurry the doctor. He should have been here before now."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

It seemed ages to them both before the doctor came. In due time he laid a lusty boy on Nancy's lap, in spite of her protests, telling her to wash and dress the child.

"What will I do with him? Good gracious, doctor, I never did such a thing in my life! You surely don't expect me to do this by myself," cried this horrified school ma'am.

"Well, you can't learn any younger," said the doctor bluntly. "And hey there, don't rub him quite so hard." Nancy had begun the job with her usual vigor. "Go easy, he's only a few minutes old you know."

Nancy went to see Dan at the hospital the next morning. She found him recovering rapidly from the appendectomy. Dan grinned feebly when informed that he was the father of the youngest member of the Brown tribe, a son, no doubt destined to be one of the tribal chiefs.

"Will you call him John Richards after his Grandad?" queried Nancy, after they had discussed the news and she had relieved Dan's mind by telling him that Bertha was doing fine.

"Well," said Dan slowly, "Shakespeare says, 'What's in a name?' We might do so, if that would make him big and strong as Father. But his mother will have to help choose his name. How big a baby is he?"

It was hard to get ahead of Nancy. She smiled as she pulled a tiny piece of string from her purse and laid it in Dan's hand. "That shows you how big his foot is, and the doctor says a big foot means a big man. He says your boy has a good big foot."

Sue had not found the newly organized Canadian school very satisfactory. The teacher was young and had little training for her job. The children were undisciplined with very diverse ideas and previous schooling experience. They came from homes so far-flung and different in their traditions that unified action came slowly. Beth should be in High School; but there

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

was none at hand. Junior was home at last, having completed his high school course, a husky lad of sixteen. He should be entering college, though he was far more interested in flying.

Lack of proper schooling and concern about the way her children were growing up, were not Sue's only worries. Zed was such a poor manager. He worked hard enough. They had closed out the Kentucky farmland, were paying off the Canadian mortgage steadily, and had more money for things they really needed. But they still rode in the old stone boat and never built a new or larger home.

Zed's temper was so uncertain; often Sue felt like the balance wheel of some machine running at high speed. For one thing, the herd law was not being enforced. Neighbors were letting their stock run free too much. The McFarland boys were the worst offenders and Sue lost her patience.

"The next time all those horses and cattle break into our wheat field, and trample a lot of our oats, let's drive them to the pound. We have told the McFarlands about this more than once, and we can't sit still and see our crops ruined."

Just the next day they found it necessary to do this. The first McFarland to hear about it, came storming up to their shack. Zed met him in the dooryard, and with quick temper flaring, told him what they thought of a man who would let his stock ruin a neighbor's crop. Zed was not a very big man; but he had a large and freely flowing vocabulary. McFarland was big and Scotch and two of his brothers were coming on the run. It looked like there would be a real fight. Sue picked up Zed's gun and stepped out into the yard. A sudden hush fell on the quarreling men. She spoke her mind and the McFarlands meekly promised it should not happen again.

Aside from such troubles, times looked good. Prices were high and their whole half-section was producing. Certainly they

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

could find a way to send Junior to college and to start Beth into high school. Mary would have to take her chance in the home school another year, but she was young. Perhaps with one more good crop they could take both girls to Spokane to spend the winter.

Early springtime had brought a cheering letter from Dan. He was fully recovered from his appendectomy, and the baby was growing fast. He and Bertha, after talking things over at length, had decided to come to Canada and resume farming. With wheat bringing two dollars a bushel and war still going on, they figured that a wheat farm was better than the average gold mine. Dan wrote they planned to get a big outfit and really make things move. With this big, cheerful brother coming to be her next door neighbor, Sue felt her burdens lifting. She remembered how often on quiet Sunday mornings at home she had heard Father singing:

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word."

Father liked to sing, even if he had not inherited the musical tenor of his Pappy. Many of the old hymns of the church had been fixed firmly in the minds of his children as he sang them around the old home. Sue found herself humming this same tune softly as she went about her work.

Mary had grown big enough to begin to assert herself. Sue began to hear that she had had some debates with her teachers at school. The debating began when Mary brought to school a text book in United States history which some of her folks had used in Kentucky. This text had a chapter dealing with the causes of the Revolutionary War in quite a different fashion from that in which the same topic was treated in the Canadian text. Mary stood up strongly for the Kentucky side of the argument, and some of her Scotch-Irish neighbors rather enjoyed

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

this new view of the question. The teacher insisted that her pupils accept the Canadian text as giving a correct picture of this 'almost forgotten incident,' as she sarcastically described the American Revolution. Zed enjoyed the echoes of this debate and was disposed to pat his little daughter on the back. He thought he knew where she got her spunk.

Both parents were much disconcerted a few days later to hear that Mary had flatly contradicted her teacher. The question this time was in regard to the capital of the State of California. Through some inadvertence, the teacher said the capital was San Francisco. Mary had travelled and studied railroad maps enough to know her facts; but she was too young to know it is not good policy to contradict your teacher. Narrow-minded teachers are quite likely to make it hard for little girls who openly prove them wrong. Sue was so distressed over the situation that she took Mary out of school and gave her lessons at home.

The Larkins who lived on an adjoining section, had taken over the post-office when Father left, and had moved it to their home. Mrs. Larkin, educated in England, was an accomplished musician; and so was her son George. Sue decided to have George give Beth piano lessons, as they had at last been able to purchase a piano. After a few months, she wondered if this were wise; her older daughter seemed to find George as interesting as the piano lessons. Sometimes she thought that George, some ten years older than Beth, was getting equally interested. Perhaps it would be sensible to send both children to spend the coming winter with their Aunt Nancy in Spokane. However, these winters when aunts substituted for parents, were not wholly satisfactory, either. Mary thought Aunt Nancy did not get as good meals as her mother did!

April, 1917 came on, and the United States joined the

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Allies. The Great War seemed to draw them all closer together. Were they not all fighting the same enemy, struggling toward the same ideals? Junior began to talk of enlisting in the Royal Air Force. However, pilots were hardly more essential to winning the war than man power on the farm, especially on these great wheat ranches. This was probably a more potent argument than those running through Sue's mind, and they were able to persuade him to stay with them another year.

Dan and Bertha had a bumper crop and a big acreage. Their second baby was coming. The whole family was glad when Retta wrote that she would spend this summer in Canada with them. Sue, driving a heavy wheat wagon toward the elevators one summer day, wondered why the wagons ahead were turning out from the middle of the roadway and going so far to one side. When she arrived at that point, she was astonished to see Dan's boy, now two and a half years old, standing in the middle of the roadway, patiently waiting for Daddy to come along. Babies had the right of way in that new country. It looked like they might have it in the new world they were all facing.

Father was eighty years old. "*If by reason of strength they be four score years*" had become for him reality. He seemed almost as strong as ever to Nancy; and, being quite a lot like him, he seemed to her to be more stubborn than ever, so she wrote in a letter to Retta. Ever since she was a little girl, they had had their occasional battles, each believing that he or she had been almost the victor, if not quite. This warfare probably commenced when Nancy went to school to him in the old schoolhouse on Turkeyfoot Creek in Ohio. Nancy said that Father always expected her to be a model to the other children, and that was one thing she never could be and didn't want to be. Father wanted Nancy to read that line in her reader, "Buzz, buzz, buzz, said the bee," so that it sounded like

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

a bee. It was very hard on Nancy to represent a bee before her classmates. She very well knew they would be telling her about it at recess, and putting a lot of extra teasing with it. All Father's pupils were expected to behave, but his little girl had to be extra good.

Their last battle had been about canning and preserving. Nancy had begun school in September and left Father in charge of her home. When she came back a month later to spend the week end with him, she found cans of fruit and jars of preserves everywhere. Fruit had been very plentiful that fall. Rather than give it away or see it waste, Father decided to go into the canning business and sell it when it was scarce. Now stone jars and glass jars of various sizes and shapes filled all her pantry shelves, covered her dining table and overflowed on her kitchen floor where they stood in neat rows. Overflowed is the right word; for Father had not been too skillful in getting them all properly sealed. Expecting approbation, he was put out at her condemnation. She pointed out how hard it would be to sell them, how impossible to use them all at home, and most emphatically, how much work it would be to clean up all his mess. Father had been doubtful about the value of his work and Nancy dashed his hopes completely. "Guess I might as well give up, trying to do a woman's work; never did like it anyway," said Father.

The real truth was that Father was tiring of Spokane; summers were all right, but the winters were too cold. He still wanted to go on to California. But first of all he wanted to pay off all his debts. The income from his Canadian land had been mounting rapidly in these years of war. The size of last year's check had startled him; this year it seemed likely to be doubly big. He was sure that he had enough now to pay off all those old debts in full. At last he would accomplish a long cherished

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

dream.

The trip back to Ohio was long, but Father enjoyed it. He never before had taken this route across the Rocky Mountains and the mid-western states. He recalled what Beth had said when she first saw the Canadian Rockies. "Mother," said the six year old as she looked out of the car window at the distant, rugged ranges, "do you know what I am going to do when I get big? I'm going to play hide and seek in the Rocky Mountains." Automobiles were rivalling the railroads now, all through this country, which had been included in his boyhood geography under the name of "The Great American Desert."

Soon he was in Chicago, recalling his trip there to the Columbian Exposition in 1893. An outstanding incident of that week stirred in his memory and he told a friendly fellow passenger about it.

"I was out on the Fair Grounds the second or third day of my visit, watching a balloon ascension. I was carrying a big market basket, full of fruit from the farm and fried chicken and salt rising bread that Sallie had packed for my lunch. I was a hearty eater and did not have much money for hotel meals. Finding myself in this big crowd watching the balloon I held my lunch basket high to keep it safe. Suddenly a very angry woman, who was jammed in front of me, got half turned around and began to pound on my shirt front and scream: 'Why, you great big fool, don't you see you are resting your basket on my best Sunday bonnet?' I've often laughed about that since. I am a pretty tall man, and I suppose I had rested my basket on her head in my excitement; but I sure didn't mean to injure her Sunday bonnet."

"I'll bet she never laughed at that joke," said his fellow passenger. "I'll bet if you had been a little man, you would have had to buy yourself a new Sunday hat when she got through

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

with you and maybe one for her too."

The conservative city of Cincinnati was feeling the war boom. New sky scrapers replaced many of the old landmarks. Gone was the old Bartlett's Business College where he had studied double entry book-keeping. The Ohio River looked much the same; how often had he swum across it! He remembered too how immense it looked in the floods of '83 and '84, when he had brought his old father and mother from the river town where they lived to his hill farm to stay until the flood went down. He recalled how his youngsters had stared when he handed his Pappy the big family Bible and asked him to read the lesson for morning worship. Apparently it had never dawned before on these babies of his that their six foot daddy had been a little boy once, who had to mind his Pappy and Mother.

He went over into Kentucky to visit his sister, whom they had always called Sis, now living alone on her farm at Tuckahoe. She was the only one of his brothers and sisters still living. Since her husband's death she had managed the Kentucky farm quite successfully. Father told her of his Canadian land, and felt that here was a time when he could boast a bit.

"Do you know, Sis, I could set all your eighty acres in one corner of my three hundred and twenty, or in the middle of it for that matter, and hardly know it was there. The wheat grows so tall all over the place."

"Yes," answered Sis, gazing thoughtfully at her rich fields of bluegrass pasture where grazed a herd of beef cattle soon to feed the English army; "but do you remember the story they used to tell about old Doc Woods? One of his neighbors came storming to him one day, mad about something Doc had done, and threatened to eat Doc alive. 'All right,' said Doc; 'but when you do, you'll have more brains in your belly than you ever

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

had in your head.' I guess that would be the way with your Canadian land with this rich Kentucky bluegrass in its middle," was Sis's quick retort.

It was quite a job to hunt up all his creditors. Some had died but their children were glad to get this surprise payment. There was his former neighbor, John Hugenbrock, who had trusted Father for the price of a tobacco crop he had sold to him. That debt had never been paid; but John had always remained a good neighbor ready to lend a tool or help in time of sickness. There was real satisfaction in settling up with John. On the other hand, it was not much satisfaction to pay what was owing to a second cousin, Charles Horton, whose small amount due had been the cause of much recrimination.

Another creditor was the widow of a storekeeper to whom he still owed for clothing and shoes his children had worn out long ago. It certainly felt good to get these old bills paid up. There was a niece, Alice Bartland, one of his heaviest creditors. The thousand dollars he had borrowed from her had gone into his farm improvements; if she had recorded the mortgage promptly which he gave her, she need not have lost her money. Her excuse was that she did not think Uncle John would ever go broke, and she just put off recording the mortgage.

Alice was dead, and had not greatly needed the money before her death. Her children were surprised and grateful to be repaid with interest. Carefully he went over the list he had kept through the intervening years. One by one, all the old debts were paid in full. As Father went about it, there kept ringing in his ears the text of a sermon heard years before in old Calvary Church; "Pay thy vows to the Most High."

Well, a promissory note was not exactly a vow to the Most High; but he felt he had paid a vow of thirty years' duration; a vow made silently and paid now without ostentation.

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

He stopped for an hour to look through the old cemetery, where were the names of more old friends and relatives, it seemed to him, than he had found among the living; Penns, Richards, Browns. Yes, there were the old, moss-covered stones of Robert Brown and his consort Ruth, his own grandfather and grandmother. Slowly he turned toward California.

CHAPTER XIV

The great fields of Saskatchewan lifted well-filled heads of wheat to the sunlight of the summer of 1918. More than ever the hungry world was crying for bread. Elevators were springing up in the rapidly growing towns. The farmers were organizing cooperative grain associations for controlling the elevators and the sale of their grain. Out of this destructive war was growing a movement for constructive social advance, which bade fair to solve much of the future trouble of the world.

Into this part of the Province two railroads came from Moose Jaw now, and another was projected from the south. These boundless prairies, stretching southward to the Gulf of Mexico, were not only binding two nations together, they were feeding the world. A man named Herbert Hoover was engineering the task, and proving you could conquer your enemy if you would share your food with him.

Sue looked out on their own wheat fields with satisfaction, mixed with anxiety. They must always face the usual risks of the vagaries of the weather that come to farmers in all regions. In this dry region were many special foes that afflicted farmers. To these two anxieties were now added the overshadowing clouds of a great war. When would it end? To many families around her it had already brought tragedy. Junior was coming eighteen, and wheat raising seemed very dull business to him. He talked constantly of flying and knew more about an airplane than she did about a sewing machine.

From Spokane Lakin had written a long letter to Sue. His

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

business was doing wonderfully well. Teaching had not lost its interest, but far more thrilling was the expanding of his feed store business, the buying of grain and selling it, often in carload lots. He was really stepping out into big business; but he was in line for the draft. Like millions of other young Americans, his private hopes must give way to the call of his country. Sue knew how he would hate war, even more than most young men. She thought of an incident of the days when he and Dan had attended college together. Lakin liked to tell this story when Dan was around.

"In our college, military training was required for graduation. You must take at least one year during your course. Dan got through his in the third year but I put mine off as long as possible and did not take it until the last year. I did hate to waste time in the senseless preparation for killing men. Maybe it was my lack of interest in the task that made me do so poorly at it; or possibly, it was my natural dislike for taking orders. I was always slow at coordinating my physical movements with orders. At any rate, I was always doing the wrong thing in drill. One day the exasperated officer in charge dressed me down properly before the whole company.

"Brown, I never saw a man who could make so many mistakes in drill and make them over so often, and make them in so many different ways. I've heard you recite Greek, and I know your brains are all right. What's the matter with your muscles? Or is it pure stubbornness? I remember just one fellow in all my experience a little worse than you are. He was with us last year.' Then, as the idea began to dawn upon him, 'By the jumping Jehosephat, his name was Brown, too. I'll bet he was your brother.' " The family had often laughed over this tale. How well they knew how much both of these boys would hate going to war!

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Sue was often called upon to help her neighbors in various ways. Since she had been one of the first settlers in the region, her acquaintance was wide. Her steadfast and kindly nature gave generous help to those in need. Often she sent Beth or went herself to assist in sickness or any household crisis. Beth might be impulsive and full of high spirits, but her hands were very capable.

Mary was getting to be quite a cowboy. Her father had given her a pony, which dashed with her over the dusty roads, and went flying with her just as fast when the same roads were icy ribbons. Once in the preceding winter, Sue's heart stood still and the kitchen clock seemed to quit ticking, when she saw her little daughter being carried home unconscious, after such a wild ride. The neighbor carrying her, called to Sue that Mary could not be hurt much; it was only a hard bump on the curly head. So it proved; and Sue felt she had one more reason for keeping Mary's curls so long. Her Puritanic soul was always seeking some excuse for the pride she felt in this bright head covered with its long curls, the care and tending of which had given the mother so many hours of purest joy.

Fully recovered, Mary was riding harder than ever and begging her parents to let her ride in the Dominion Day races. Long ago she and Beth had learned that Canadians celebrated their Fourth of July on July First and called it Dominion Day. Mary was sure she could uphold the Kentucky reputation for fast and fancy riding. She still felt sure that Uncle Sam was bigger than John Bull, and was apt to fling out the Stars and Stripes at embarrassing moments.

An older and better trained teacher had replaced the one with whom Mary had battled; both she and Beth were attending their home school during the short summer term. Nearly all the pupils rode their own horses and hitched them outside till

B Y R E A S O N O F S T R E N G T H

lessons were over. Parents said they believed horseback riding was a favorite subject of study judging from the races that seemed to take the place of home work. Sue worried because both her girls were adopting the rough manners of the boys and men around them, and copying their rougher language.

Lakin had written again, a brief note saying he had been rejected by the draft because of some hidden eye defect. A third baby had come to Dan and Bertha; now they had quite a family, two boys and a girl. Dan said it was plainly up to him to raise big crops of wheat to feed his own family as well as the hungry hordes of Europe.

August was the end of summer in that far north; sometimes it brought the first snow of the long winters. Sue felt she *must* get her boy into college and her girls into a good school. The University of Montana lay not far south of them. It would not cost too much to send Junior there. Now that Father had gone to California, Nancy was living by herself just outside Spokane. Lakin came in to see her most week ends. She would be glad to take Sue's girls for the winter, and see that they both got into good schools. How glad Sue was when November arrived and brought with it the Armistice!

The next three or four years Sue felt as if she were doing the thing Beth had once made into the day dream of a six year old; she was playing hide and seek up and down the Rocky Mountains; from the ranch in Canada, to the University of Montana, to Spokane, and back to the ranch.

A family once split apart does not readily join itself together again. Junior, after his freshman year, driven by the unrest that war had fomented, drifted to Spokane. A year later he wrote Sue that he was going to California, like his Grandad. Father's letters were full of praise for Los Angeles. He said it seemed to him the gate to Paradise, after the cold and hardship

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

of pioneer life in Canada. Sue, reading his letters, smiled to herself; she would have to see it to believe all that. Maybe she would see it before long, the way her family seemed to be moving ahead of her. Lakin had closed out his Spokane interests, and was on his way to join Father. Nancy insisted that Spokane was still good enough for her, and that she would not move again if the whole family begged her to come to them.



Almost frantically Sue tried to hold together the fragments of her scattered family. No doubt it was already too late to bring Junior back to the fold. He definitely had joined that generation to whom freedom too often meant license. These youngsters had ceased debating Life's questions; they were living out the answers for themselves.

Returning to the Canadian home with her girls, after a winter with Nancy, Sue wondered if she might not better have gone south. Both girls were satisfied enough with ranch life; too satisfied. George Larkin, Beth's former music teacher, was

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

quick to note her return to the neighborhood, and almost equally quick to come with an invitation to a neighborhood dance. Much against her better judgment, Sue gave in to Beth's insistence and watched them go off together.

It was a very rainy night and George had no automobile, like many of the neighbor boys. So they drove off with his young horse hitched to his mother's old buckboard. In the darkness, George got off the trail into the standing water of the slough. The excited horse gave a lunge, the harness broke, and they were stalled in the middle of the slough with water knee-deep.

Beth was not much excited. "You will have to get out, George, and fix the harness. Roll up your pants and take off your shoes, so we can go on to the dance when you get it fixed up. It ought not be very hard to do."

But George seemed greatly embarrassed. Possibly this young Englishman had never gone wading in the presence of a pretty girl on a dark night; but he could see no help for it. "Promise me you won't tell, or the other fellows will never let me hear the last of it. Will you promise, Beth, now really?"

Beth gave her promise without thinking much of it. It did not seem very important to her; but, somehow, the story slipped out before she thought. Beth could tell any story so that it sounded funny, and the crowd laughed heartily. George was greatly offended and could not laugh it off. When the story reached Sue, she scolded Beth for not keeping her promise. She felt that she had made little impression, and that the experience was typical of this rough way of living.

Mary, just coming into her teens, was not much interested in the boys. She liked to ride and play athletic games. Her mother was shocked one day to find her amusing a crowd of thrashers by walking on her hands. There was nothing really

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

very shocking about it; the girl was dressed in a shirt and overalls. If it had not been for her dangling curls, she would have passed for a good-looking boy. When Zed heard about it, he just laughed and couldn't see why Sue was so stirred up.

Mary had begun to enjoy cooking almost as much as she enjoyed riding. Big Olsen, a Swedish neighbor, had married a frivolous English girl who knew very little of cooking. When thrashing time came, Olsen begged Sue to let Mary help his Lona. Her mother let her go with much misgiving. It was a three day job, and she was afraid that Mary and Lona would not work well together. So the second day, Sue went over to see how things were going. The men had come in for dinner, but Lona felt the social demand more keenly than she felt their demand for food. She was smirking and smiling and chatting, while Mary stood over the hot stove, frying the steaks and dishing up the great plates of vegetables.

Mary smiled to see her mother bringing reinforcements. "We can work together, Mama, but gosh, that Lona! She's no good at all when the men are around, and poor enough when they're not here."

When the job was done, Olsen asked Mary what he owed her. "Whatever is right," was her answer. Lona thought two dollars a day would be about right. Olsen exploded: "By golly, the men get seven dollars a day, and Mary worked harder than any of the men. We'll give her seven dollars a day."

Lona was very much put out at this verdict. "Oh, but women never get paid men's wages for anything and certainly not for housework. She's only a chit of a girl anyway. In England she'd count herself lucky to get seven shillings."

"We're not in England and we're not paying out shillings," stormed Olsen. "I'd like to know what you would have done without her. Guess we'd all have done without much to eat."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

We'll give her five dollars a day and let it go at that."

More worried about Junior than she dared admit, Sue hit upon the plan of sending Beth to finish her high school in Los Angeles. She would be safe with Lakin and her grandfather to look after her; and she might swing Junior back to his family's ideals, if anyone could do it. The brother and sister got along well together and made a good team. Beth was delighted with this plan. She said, "I'm sure I'll like Los Angeles, Mother, and I promise to do all I can to keep Junior straight."

Junior already had a job sorting and packing walnuts. His ambitious sister soon had two jobs besides her high school classes. She had a part time job waiting tables in a restaurant and an evening job as cashier in a movie. It was fortunate that the tiny apartment she and Junior had taken, required but little care.

Affairs in Canada now made a new demand on Sue for her sympathy and help. One day Dan complained to her and Bertha: "I'm not feeling like myself. Here I am the daddy of three children, and with a big wheat crop coming that will bring me an income ten times what I used to earn teaching school. But I don't sleep at nights and am too tired daytimes to take any interest in anything."

"He's working too hard," said Bertha. I've been worried for a good while. I think we'd better get out of here before he breaks down completely. This has been terribly heavy work, handling so much land single handed, and then trying to help me about the house with our babies. I don't know what we can do, but I'm so glad Retta is coming to spend this summer with us. She is so much help."

Retta came on early in June; but Dan had grown so much worse that they were all greatly alarmed. Hearing this bad news, Lakin hurried north from Los Angeles, and took over the job

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

of handling the harvest for his brother. The doctor said Dan's condition was the result of many hardships in previous years, combined with long hours of toil. He advised him to quit farming and move to a milder climate.

This was bitter medicine for Dan to take. There was some compensation in the cheerful way the whole family helped shoulder his burdens. It was up to him to cooperate by getting well as promptly as he could. So he and Bertha dropped their worries and went to stay a while with Nancy near Spokane. Lakin and Retta, with the help of Sue and Zed, would take care of the children and the harvest. Then they would rent the farm to some good tenant and Retta and Lakin would follow Dan and Bertha with the children. After that they would all travel down to Los Angeles together. The trip down the West Coast by boat was certain to be a very lovely and restful one. This plan worked well enough with just a hitch or two.

The first hitch came when Dan and Bertha found Nancy in the midst of remodeling her house, and moving it to a new location; a plan she had undertaken before she heard that they were coming. Her move had been too far along to stop it, when she did receive the word. Just one of those things which often happened when Nancy was around. She welcomed them heartily; but a house can not be very comfortable for an invalid, when it is on rollers, moving across two fields to a new foundation.

The second hitch came when Lakin and Retta attempted to bring the three children to their parents. They had found a good tenant who was glad to rent Dan's ranch and take over his equipment. The abundant harvest had been marketed, or was stored in the Co-op elevators. The autumn snows had begun before they got started for Spokane with the children. They were held up at the Line by some very stony-hearted in-

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

spects for the Canadian government. These officials were certain there was something wrong, when three children, only one of whom had been born in the United States, were being taken out of Canada by a "pretended" Aunt and Uncle. Although the war was over, it had made these inspectors and their regulations very rigid. A generation later, they or their type would have said: "Don't you know there is a war on?" So there was nothing to do but get off the train. The officials seemed to feel they had uncovered an international plot.

Lakin expostulated; Retta used all her charm, and finally tried her severest school teacher manner; all in vain. These stubborn Englishmen continued to insist, they must not pass. The most they would concede was to admit the two adults and the oldest child, who having been born in the United States, could claim citizenship. The other two babies must stay on the Canadian side of the Line, until a legal order came from their parents for their admission to this foreign land.

So Lakin took his oldest nephew and went on, leaving behind some rather sulphurous remarks about this sort of international brotherhood. Retta took the other two children to a hotel and awaited a telegram confirming her right to bring them out.

These irritations smoothed themselves out in due time. Dan got on his feet again, and he and Lakin established a new business venture in Los Angeles. They first tried the manufacture of synthetic maple syrup. Selling this out at a profit, they went into the manufacture of milled lumber, calling themselves a sash and door company. This business expanded to prove very profitable. Zed and Sue, talking these things over, could foresee their problems growing harder to solve the longer they remained in Canada. Declining prices and a year of drought might hit them pretty hard. Neither of them faced

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

the long, bitter winters with the vitality that had been theirs in earlier years. Junior and Beth needed family ties and Mary was ready for schooling beyond the elementary grades. Beth had entered the University; but her infrequent letters had been giving most of their space lately to chat about her friend Charley. It seemed that Charley was manager of the little theatre where Beth acted as cashier. Sue did not like the tone of these letters. She hoped that this daughter of hers, with her bright mind and capable hands, would finish college before she thought of marrying. Beth was not yet seventeen. Sue began to hasten the move to California.

The day they left, it moved them greatly to have so many neighbors act as if it was a funeral. It reminded them of the day they had driven away from their Kentucky home to move to Canada. Zed said to Sue: "I guess some of these folks will appreciate us more after we are gone, than they seemed to when we were here." "Isn't it always that way," answered Sue; "but they have been good neighbors." The winter snow was already deep before they got away. Instead of the long drive in a jolt wagon, a neighbor's automobile whisked them quickly to the railroad. The trip to California was like dropping from Winter into Summer.

Father met them at the depot. He picked up Sue's heavy handbag and went marching through the crowd with it at a rate that made Zed, with his share of the load, hustle to keep up. "Why, Father," said Sue, "you'd better not carry that. Shouldn't we call a cab?"

"Oh, it's only a few steps," said Father, "I am staying at a private rooming house down town. Lakin and I have rooms there, and they can put you up for a day or two. Dan and Bertha are living out in a distant section."

"How well you are looking, Father," said Sue. "California

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

must agree with you."

"It does agree with me," was his answer. "I'm over eighty years old, but I feel like I was thirty years younger. It makes me feel extra good to have all, or nearly all, my family close around me again. A family is one of the wonderful things of the world. I wonder why nations can not get along without fighting, like families can?" Zed looked at Sue a little ruefully. They had had some fights, too.

Junior was apparently already drifting beyond home influences. All these years of near orphanhood had engendered a spirit of reckless independence, which was inflamed by the tumult of the times. Youth everywhere was surging against the old restraints. His mother worried greatly; had she waited too long to help Junior?

Sue and Zed soon had their family settled in a home they were able to buy, already nicely furnished. After the hardships of pioneer life in Canada, they were all ready to agree with Father that Los Angeles was like the gate to Paradise. They had located in the eastern part of the city where fog did not greatly bother them and the bright sunshine of the morning was moderated by the gentle breezes of the afternoon. From a hill near their home they could catch a glimpse of the ocean twenty miles to the westward. Not far from them, Dan and Bertha with their three children had a pleasant home.

Sue and her girls could hardly get used to the marvel of abundant, clean water, running from their kitchen faucets, instead of having to be hauled up from a deep well outside the house with an icy rope. It was a great luxury to find the house always comfortable and to see the yard always full of bright flowers; to have a bath tub, a telephone, and electric lights. There was a constant feeling of amazement at the displays of fruit and vegetables in the huge open-air markets that stretched

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

everywhere along the highways. The highways themselves were equally amazing; mile after mile of them—wide and well paved, and best of all, free from dust.

Then, most marvelous of all, seemed the vast tides of humanity that moved so constantly on the downtown streets. People of all races, and especially of all religions and health cults, built their temples on the corners and proclaimed their individual opinions from the streets. Very often the variegated and informal clothing of these strident personalities spoke more loudly than their words.

"Look," called Sue to her girls one bright morning, as the postman brought the mail, "here's a letter from Nancy, and what do you think, she's coming to Los Angeles."

"Do you mean she is moving here?" said Mary, who had grown accustomed to sudden moves by her Aunt Nancy.

"No, not moving here, just coming to visit. But I don't understand part of her letter. She says there may be some surprises in her visit and for us not to be too excited, but she hopes our new house will be all shined up and ready for visitors. Why, she writes as if she was bringing someone with her," puzzled Sue.

"Do you suppose she is bringing that widower with her?" said Beth, ever prompt to leap toward a romantic conclusion.

"Of course not," said Sue; "Nancy would not do a thing like that without some previous warning. Don't get such wild ideas in your head, Beth."

"I don't know," mused Mary. "Aunt Nancy never reacts like other folks to anything out of the ordinary. Don't you remember what a terrible adventure she had with that goat she bought? I never heard such a small thing unroll into such a tale as she told about it. You'd have thought the goat she bought to take the place of a cow, had turned into a demon, the way it acted

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

after she got it. It climbed on her shed roof where she could not reach it, chewed up her washing, clothes line and all, fought with the neighbors' calves, and frightened her chickens. I think she paid five dollars for it, kept it three days and sold it for three dollars to some innocent bystander." Mary laughed heartily at this recollection of one of Aunt Nancy's tales that had regaled her in childhood.

Dan, dropping in to chat and hearing the news about Nancy, was reminded of how she had once astonished him. "Nancy and I were on the way back to Cincinnati after one of those summers in Canada. When we got into Chicago, we had to change railroad depots and I left Nancy sitting in the waiting room while I went to get a shave and a stroll in the fresh air. When I got back, Nancy had one of her strange adventures to tell me. While I was gone, some man, she did not know whether he was an official or not, had come through the depot calling her name loudly, 'Nancy Brown, Nancy Brown.' I asked her if she did not answer, did not make herself known, and she said she was sure no one in Chicago really knew her. Said she just supposed he was announcing the departure of some boat by the name of Nancy Brown. I told her she should have answered to her name. If I had been hurt in a street accident, there would have been no other way to reach her except by such a messenger.

"We found out what it was all about when we went to get on the train and found Nancy's ticket missing. I promptly went to the Lost and Found Desk and there was Nancy's ticket, with her name plainly written on it. She had evidently dropped it from her purse when we first came into the depot. When it had been brought to them they paged her but got no response."

"Anyway, we will soon know about this mystery," said Sue. "She writes that she will arrive next Thursday and this is Tuesday."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Nancy did arrive as she had promised but alone. When they asked here where the widower was, she said he had really promised to follow her down the next week. He had never visited California, and she hoped all the family would help him have a good time. He was very shy but awfully nice.

Sure enough, the widower William, as they all called him now, arrived the following week and all the family exerted themselves to help Nancy entertain him in true Los Angeles style. They took the excursion to Catalina Island in the wonderful glass-bottomed boat. They climbed Mt. Wilson and looked through the great telescope at the moon. They picnicked in the parks and at the Zoo. It was wonderful to William to go with Nancy on a long real estate trip in to some new section, or into the orange country where promoters talked to them, urged them to buy, and even fed them to get them into a buying mood.

The family all liked William though he was very quiet, very easily embarrassed. On a trip to one of the bathing beaches, he stood so long and so silent that Nancy began to think he had lost the power of speech at the unusual sights. At other times he talked quite freely when alone with Nancy.

"If it's the costume of that red-headed bathing beauty over yonder that keeps you so tongue-tied, maybe we had better find some other place to sit," she said impatiently.

William was truly hurt. It was quite evident he had not even seen the bevy of bathing beauties. It was old Ocean himself, the mighty Pacific, that had gripped his imagination. Nancy was sorry she had been so suspicious.

"I was looking at the waves," he explained; "wondering how they could keep coming — keep coming forever. Where does all this water come from?"

Nancy felt that even if she had been unduly suspicious, yet

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

she had some reason to be impatient with William. He had been here more than a week and was saying he must be going back in a day or two more; and he had not yet said the all-important words; the words which, she hoped, had been his real reason for this trip. Surely he had received all the encouragement any man might expect. She had known him as a neighbor for some time and he had been friendly and talkative enough. He had given her many a lift with jobs too hard for a woman living alone. What was a girl to do?

Suddenly he was talking, saying the things she had been waiting to hear; telling her how dear she was to him and how he had admired her vigorous and independent spirit ever since she had come to his neighborhood to live.

Then he hesitated and stammered. "But you know, Nancy, something awful I've done. I'm not fit to ask a nice woman to marry me."

As Nancy sat speechless, he went on haltingly. "You see, I worked all my life and I did own that nice farm next to your place, where I still live. Just before my wife died, she coaxed me to sign over the deed to our only boy. I thought life was over and did it to please her. But our boy is married now and his wife hasn't much use for the old man. Too late, I can see I was a fool to give up my property; all I have to offer a woman now is the right to mend my socks and cook for me."

Nancy's temper flared. "I do not have to marry a man to get socks to mend or a chance to do some cooking. You must not run yourself down and act as if you were no good. You are not an old man yet, and if you don't think well of yourself, who will?"

She could have bitten her tongue as soon as the words were out. Money meant little to Nancy; but now happiness seemed slipping from her hand. It was no news to her that this generous man had signed away his lovely farm. Her real anger was

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

for the woman who was to blame for the act.

Now William stood abashed and more silent than ever. The moment of romance had fled. Nancy felt sure she would have another chance to make the proper decision; but it would take some time to heal the hurt of her impatient words. The wedding arrangements she had wanted to complete must wait awhile.

Silently they turned away from the waves forever hammering at the sandy beach. Perhaps back in the cold north William would again feel his need of her and she could make him understand how it was possible for him still to bring that gift more desirable than money, the affection and security of a home. Nancy earnestly hoped that when the time came again, she would have sense enough to refrain from sharp retorts.

Without more words on this affair, William turned homeward. Nancy's visit ended not long afterwards. Her romance-loving family often wondered why a plan so well laid did not come off.

The various members of the family were finding California life interesting. Even Junior agreed on this point, though his interests lay chiefly in wild and reckless living. There was no lack of that for those who sought it; but milder pleasures abounded too. Mary and Beth were both doing well in school. The boys were absorbed in their expanding business. Retta had promised to spend her next vacation with them. She wrote: "I would try to get a transfer to your city schools; but you know how little college work I have had. California standards are so high they are not willing to accept experience or successful teaching in place of college records. So I see little chance for me there. Maybe I'll take a year off and spend it all with you."

Father had come to his eighty-fifth birthday, five years beyond his four score years. He seemed quite strong yet. These last years in sunny California had been among the happiest of

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

his life. There were so many new things to see, so many trips to take. Real estate agents with big free busses stood at every corner, anxious to show you some new sub-division or orange grove. It was useless to insist that you did not intend to buy; it was their job to show you a chance to get rich quick. Father enjoyed these things as much as he did the climate.

One day when he had come back from one of these trips, Mary said: "You have had a lot of fun in your life, haven't you, Grandpa?"

Father said, "Yes, I have had a lot of fun; but I'm glad to say it mostly has been clean fun. I had some just yesterday. I sat in Pershing Square on a sunny bench, and a little Mexican girl came past, a regular little Carmen. I've always liked children, so I called 'Hello' to her. She had with her a three year old boy with big black eyes and dark hair. 'Hello, Senor,' said the girl politely. They both stared at my long white beard. She whispered to the boy and they both said politely, 'Hello, Senor Santa Claus.' "

Father chuckled and went on: "But what I really like in this big city are the churches, there are so many of them. I go into any of them, a Mormon temple, or a Jewish synagogue. But I like our big Methodist church here the best, with their fine choir and splendid sermons. I really think this city deserves its name, the City of the Angels. I've always enjoyed that line by Oliver Wendell Holmes:

'You hear that boy laughing? You think he's all fun;

But the angels laugh too, at the good he has done.'

I believe the angels laugh. Yes, I have had a lot of fun.' "

Suddenly cancer struck him. He had dreaded this enemy ever since he had seen his father die with it many years before. The doctor that he consulted shook his head. He grunted something about, "A little late, this should have been caught a little

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

sooner." He told Father that the treatment he thought necessary would be very painful. He could hardly urge it upon him. Father said he could stand it and went through the ordeal without a word of complaint, or a moan of pain, though tears of agony streamed down his face.

"I did not suppose that any man could endure that without making an out-cry," said the surgeon, himself deeply moved.

Weeks of pain and suffering followed. All this, it seemed, had been in vain and he grew steadily worse. Different members of the family took their turn visiting him and waiting upon him.

One day Lakin came to see him. Father's sufferings stirred Lakin's deep sympathy and he began talking to him of that belief in immortality which so frequently lights up the philosophy of the ancient Greeks.

"Our Greek professor in my college days, old Doc Perkins as the boys called him, once read to our class a beautiful story. I think its title was 'Ion' from one of the tragedies of Euripides. Clemanthe, the friend of a young man who was about to die, asked him this question: 'Shall we meet again?'

"The dying youth slowly replied; 'I have asked that dreadful question of the hills that look eternal, of the clear streams that flow on forever, and of the stars among whose fields of azure my spirit hath walked in glory. All were dumb! But when I gaze upon thy living face, I feel that there is something in the love that mantles through its beauty that can not wholly perish. We shall meet again, Clemanthe.' "

Father listened quietly to Lakin's earnest young voice trying to bring comfort and answered with deep assurance; "It's fine to know that the Greeks had something to cling to; but ever since I was converted in the old Methodist Church at McKendre, my mind has been at rest on the question of the

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

future life. I can say with Job who probably lived before the Greek philosophers: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at that latter day upon the earth: and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.' " And Lakin found himself getting rather than giving comfort.

Racked by the slow agony, Father still spoke words of assurance. Sue told him her worries and he comforted her as he had always done. No mother's love had ever gone unnoticed. Some day Junior would need her and remember her unfailing motherhood. Beth would be all right as she got a little older. All this wild talk about the boys was just the effervescence of youth. She had plenty of brains and a good heart. Mary would help keep her sister steady. He felt sure that Nancy and Retta would be along some day to stand by and help.

To Sue, Father's word had always been the truth and she felt a deep assurance in his strong counsel. Pain tormented him, but it was physical pain. His mind was not tortured. He remembered how many men had suffered both mental and physical anguish. Surely he could endure just one of these.

Old memories filled his waking hours and sometimes it was hard to distinguish between dreams and realities. One day Beth came to see him. She was always smiling, always full of life. He thought she was like his lovely Sallie in the days when he courted her, as the great Civil War was about to begin. Soon Beth would be as old as Sallie had been when she married him.

Slowly he quoted the solemn dirge of the Hebrew Psalmist; "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength, they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." He motioned toward his Bible. "Please read to me from the fourteenth chapter of St. John."

BY REASON OF STRENGTH

Clear and resonant rang out the girlish voice: "Let not your heart be troubled . . . in my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

Was this Sallie's voice talking to him? A spasm of agony shook his frame. Suddenly Beth was on her knees, his head in her arms, his disfigured face on her breast. She was singing softly an old, old, lullaby, which her mother had sung to her in the old Kentucky farmhouse:

"Lullaby and goodnight, with roses bedight,
With lilies bested, Is baby's wee bed:
Lay thee down now and rest, May thy slumber be blest.
Lay thee down now and rest, May thy slumber be blest."

Surely this was Sallie come to lead him home. A gasp, a sigh, and he fell asleep. Sallie had come for him.

Date Due

CT 275 B76 B88 1951
BROWN WINFRED Q
BY REASON OF STRENGTH

39338513 HSS



000005691761

CT 275 B76 B88 1951
Brown, Winfred Q.
By reason of strength.

0243556E MAIN

A5970